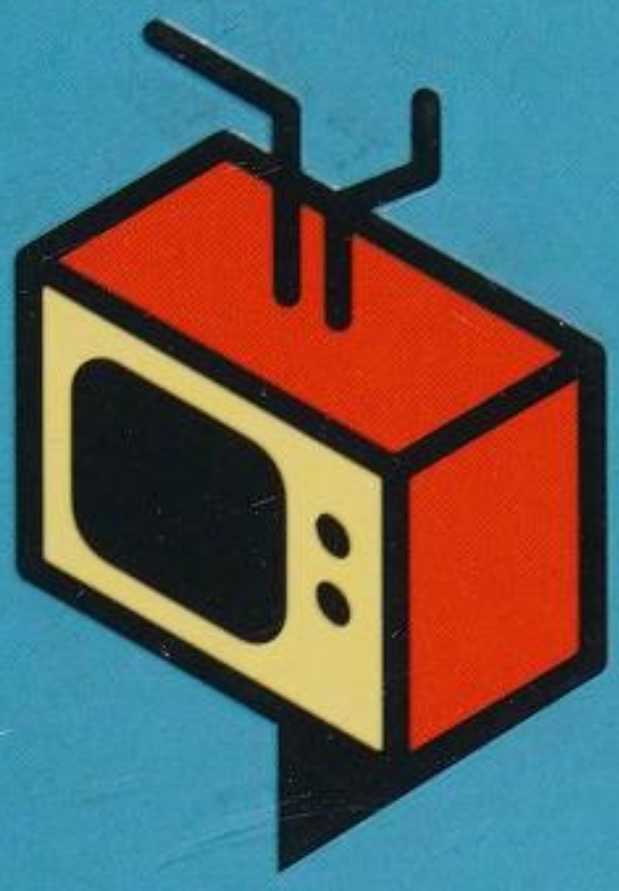
30 Second Thrillers

Tales that tell the stories behind the Ads we love!



K. V. Sridhar

BLOOMSBURY

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IT

K.V. Sridhar (Pops)

Founder & Chief Creative Officer, Hyper Collective

K.V. Sridhar aka Pops, is one of the most celebrated ad-makers of the country. From humble beginnings as a bollywood film billboard painter to the National Creative Director of Leo Burnett India, to being the Chief Creative Officer of SapientNitro's India operations, and now plunging into the adventure called entrepreneurship as the Founder & Chief Creative Officer of Hyper Collective, Pops has seen it all. Pops comes with over thirty-five years of experience in building brands like Coke, Thums-Up, Limca, Maaza, Samsung, LG, GM and many more. He was recently named in the prestigious list of Hall of Fame of Asian advertising, media and marketing leaders of the past forty years by Campaign Asia. He has won over 22 Cannes lions and over 100 international awards.

The creator of the Gandhi Font, a brilliant artist whose is famous by the name iPops, an ace cook who loves his food, a man of simplicity.

In the humble insights and observations of life lives a brilliant ad! KV Sridhar's romance with advertising and life is the genesis of this book, 30 Second Thrillers. A book that captures the magic that has unfolded on our TV screens in the last 30 years as 30 seconders. The book is an ode to our common viewers, our aunts and uncles, our neighbours, that stranger who we have had a random conversation with in our train journey.

A book that takes the reader to a world where magic is made! To the world where creative oompa-loompas of advertising work tirelessly to create 30 seconds that become a part of peoples' lives. A book that tells the stories behind the 30 second story, how was it made, when did the idea spark like a bulb, who thought of it and when, the anecdotes, the efforts all of it captured in words! Further ornamented by the inputs and insights of the makers themselves. A book that covers every great ad-maker and their story, be it the 'Chal meri Luna', be it the vintage 'Humara Bajaj' to the new 'Har ek friend zaroori hota hai' the book revisits all. Starting from the Doordarshan days and arriving at the YouTube today, the journey is worded succulently in this book.

It is these people, the viewers who are oblivious of the world behind ads that are the core inspiration of this book, and it is to them, to us, to you this book speaks to.

₹499

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Tales that tell the stories behind the Ads we love!

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POPS
K. V. Sridhar

BLOOMSBURY
NEW DELHI • LONDON • OXFORD • NEW YORK • SYDNEY

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An Ode to Late AG Krishnamurthy

There are leaders, there are followers but seldom do we meet this rare breed, 'The Creators'. With AG Krishnamurthy traversing into the light, we lost one such rare Creator. A man who defined advertising, its creativity and its trade in India, for India.
Your wisdom, your virtues live with us, within us!
We will miss you!

Dedicated to
My wife Srijayanthi
My son Saketh
My daughter Srisamhitha
Because you are, I am

Acknowledgement

Whenever you set out to do something new, the journey is never just yours, even though you started it. At every stop, at every turn, people join in as catalysts and design destiny with you. When this book was just an idea in my mind, I knew that I was headed on to a new journey. What I did not know then is that it would become a caravan of old friends and new associations. And as destiny took shape in the form of this wonderful book, I find it an opportune moment to thank each of those enablers. Because gratitude I believe, will complete the circle that runs infinitely.

To begin with, I would like to thank all the twenty-three contributors, who are my friends and colleagues. **Alyque Padamsee, 'Late AG Krishnamurthy', Piyush Pandey, Prasoon Joshi, R. Balki, Josy Paul, Prahlad Kakkar, Kailash Surendranath, Prasoon Pandey, Ram Madhvani, Shantanu Sheorey, Prakash Varma, KS Chakravarthy, Agnello Dias, Gauri Shinde, Amit Sharma, Nitesh Tiwari, Priti Nair, Arun Iyer , Shriram Iyer, Ashish Khazanchi, Kartik Iyer, and Parshu Narayanan**. This book is as much theirs, as it is mine. Each one of them gave their valuable time and spared hours from their busy schedules, to share all their valuable stories for this book, to be completed.

I thank them for selflessly sharing material they could have had very easily saved, for their own books. It was an experience that I shall never forget, because this book became a catalyst in meeting friends, enabling us to hold conversations on topics we love. When I was putting this book together I realized how fortunate I am, to know, not only the pioneers but the current generation of advertising creative as well. What humbled me was their unparalleled excitement about this book!

A very special thanks to my dear friend, partner, brother, writer, and my critic **Agnello Dias** for painfully spell checking and correcting my grammar.

I would also like to thank **Reena Kamath** and **Yogesh Kamath** for being an inseparable part of this experience and

for researching, coordinating, transcribing and helping me write this. Their excitement after each interview and after every story they heard, was a litmus test for caliber of this content. Most importantly, their reaction was both, great feedback for the book and constant motivation for me to keep on going. This book wouldn't have been possible without their tireless contribution. I also thank **Archana Singh** for being the link and for coordinating the little nuances that often go ignored.

I also thank **Namrata Gosavi**, who I lovingly call my adopted daughter for designing the cover and the entire book. She and I both bond over art, she flawlessly converts my vision into reality and while doing so she unfailingly adds her quirky magic to everything, which makes the end product beautifully unique. Your art accentuates this book!

Finally, I would like to thank my family to whom this book is actually dedicated. I believe, you can be what you want to be, when you have a family that stands besides you like an immovable pillar! I thank them for their million sacrifices and infinite love. I would just say that I am what I am, because of what they are.

Contributors

Alyque Padamsee

CEO, APAdvertising Pvt. Ltd

A theatre personality and an ad-film maker Alyque is what they call a vintage legend. His creations include timeless ads like Lalitaji for Surf, Charlie for Cherry Blossom Shoe Polish, Liril, Kamasutra, Humara Bajaj. He was awarded the Padma Shri in 2000.

Late AG Krishnamurthy

Late AG Krishnamurthy was and still is one of the most significant man of Indian advertising. The founder of Mudra Communications Limited has been one of the visionaries who has shaped ads and advertising industry in India. His recent demise has left a void, he can never be forgotten for he gave us ads like I love you Rasna, Vimal and many more.

Piyush Pandey

Co-Executive Chairman & Chief Creative Director, Ogilvy & Mather and Vice-Chairman ofO&MAsia Pacific

The man who is synonymous to Indian advertisement, the one who changed the course of ads in India and gave it a story-telling touch, is the one who has given us beautiful ads like Cadbury – Kuch Khaas Hai, Chal Meri Luna, the lyrics of Mile Sur Mera Tumhara were his poetry, the quirky Fevicol ads to the latest Fortune Oil. He has been awarded the civilian honour of the Padma Shri by the Government of India.

Prasoon Joshi

CEO of McCann World group India and Chairman (Asia Pacific), a subsidiary of global marketing firm McCann Erickson

Popularly known as a lyricist and screenplay writer, Prasoon is also an impeccable ad-man. Campaigns like Thanda Matlab Coca-Cola, Happy Dent – Mann Roshan are his brain child. Prasoon has been awarded Padma Shri and has also received a National Film Award for Best Lyrics.

R. Balki

Ex Chairman Lowe Lintas and Bollywood Writer, Director and Producer

Balki a popular Filmaker with movies like Cheeni Kum and Paa to his credit is also a brilliant ad-film maker. Ads like the What an Idea Sirji series, Havells, Jaago Re – Tata Tea are his ideas and excellence.

Josy Paul

Chairman and National Creative Director BBDO India

His creative acumen has given the ad world gems like, Gillette's 'Women Against Lazy Stubble' which has won several international awards like Cannes Lions including the Black Lion for 'creative effectiveness' – the only one in Asia, also the sensation like Touch the Pickle for Whisper. Last year Josy was named 'Creative Person of the Year' - for India and South Asia.

Prahlad Kakkar

Founder, Genesis Film Productions

The maker of the popular Pepsi advertisements that featured Sachin Tendulkar and Amitabh Bachchan and also the famous ad of Strepsils where he makes the MGM Lion roar, Prahlad Kakkar is an ad-film Director known for his flair and finesse.

Kailash Surendranath

An ad-filmmaker who has over 3,500 ad films to his credit of which the gems are the unforgettable 'Mile Sur mera tumhara' and the evergreen Liril ad, featuring Karen Lunel under the waterfalls. Other popular ads made by him are Sunsilk, Britannia Glucose Biscuits and many more.

Prasoon Pandey

Founder, Corcoise Films

A quintessential story teller, Prasoon is one of the most awarded ad film directors and ranks amongst the top 100 ad film directors of the world. His work includes spectacles like the Fevicol Ads, One Black Coffee ad of Ericsson, which was the first Indian commercial to win at Cannes.

Ram Madhvani

Founder, Equinox

Known for his penchant for perfection and detailing, Ram Madhvani is one of the most respected filmmakers and director in India. He has directed iconic ads like the Happydent White, Thums-Up Bungee Jumping, Adidas featuring Sachin Tendulkar, Airtel – Har ek friend zaroori and many more. 'Neerja', a biographical film on 'Head Purser', Neerja Bhanot is his brilliance.

Shantanu Sheorey

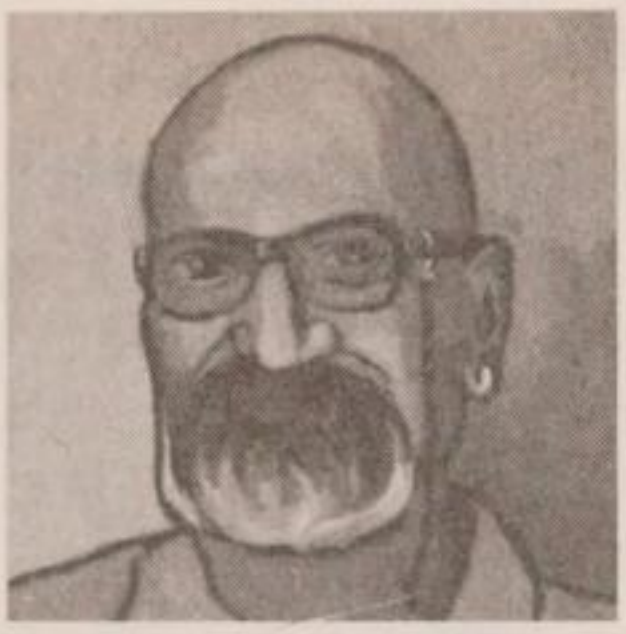
Founder, Shantanu Sheorey Films Pvt Ltd

Shantanu Sheorey has been an advertising photographer and film maker for the past thirty years. He has to his credit some of the most memorable advertising and marketing campaigns and over nine hundred ad films to his credit. He has done ads like Garden Vareli, Raymond, Gwalior Suitings, Vimal and many more.

Prakash Varma

Principal Director & Founder, Nirvana Films

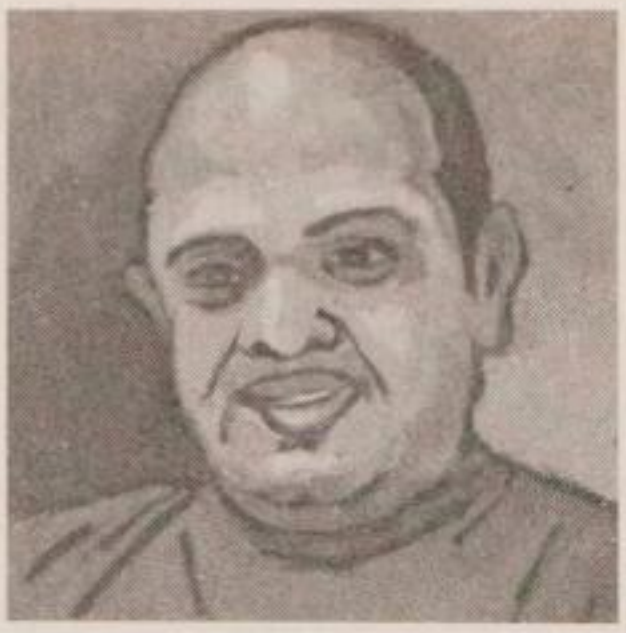
An Indian film-maker who is the mantle behind a slew of popular ads, Prakash Varma is the man who infused life in the brilliant idea called the Vodafone Zoo Zoos he has directed and produced the iconic Vodafone ads including the ones that feature the Pug.



KS Chakravarty

Co-founder and CCO, Tidal7 Brand & Digital

Lovingly known as 'Chax', KS Chakravarthy has been in the advertising industry for over 35 years now. His creative brilliance has been the backbone of timeless ads like, Wah Taj for Taj Mahal Tea, Tata Docomo featuring Ranbir Kapoor, Airtel and many more.



Agnello Dias

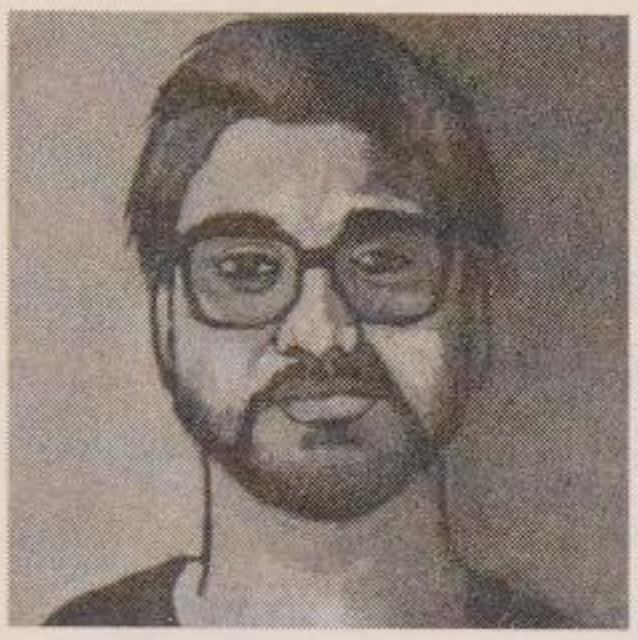
Chairman & Co-founder TapRoot India

He is the creative brain behind iconic ads like the Airtel – Har ek Friend, Time of India – Pakya, Pepsi – Change the Game, Teach India. Agnello won the country's first Grand Prix and first Integrated Lion at Cannes. He is one of the most revered creative minds of the ad world.

Gauri Shinde

Film Director

An ad-film director and feature film director, Gauri Shinde managed to weave magic through her work. The ads like Tanishq, Havells – Women are not appliances are her work of art. She has won hearts with her directorial debut film, English Vinglish.



Amit Sharma

Co-Founder & Director, Chrome Pictures

The Kaun Banega Crorepati ads, the tear jerking Google Reunion ad are the direction of the young talent, Amit Sharma. His quirkiness and the need to be Indian is what make his ads par excellence. He has also directed the Bollywood film, 'Tevar' starring Arjun Kapoor and Sonakshi Sinha.

Nitesh Tiwari

Nitesh Tiwari Ex Adman, Bollywood Writer and Director

A writer, a director known for his Bollywood movies like Chillar Party, Bhootnath Returns Nitesh is a creative factory that has churned out ad films which are loved widely. He is the creative brain behind ads like KBC ads, Mc Donalds. He has bagged many awards for his writing and as a creative director in shows like Cannes, Asia Pacific Adfest and many more. Currently he has completed the movie 'Dangal' starring Aamir Khan.

Priti Nair

Director, Curry Nation

The extremely impactful almost omnipresent ad campaign for Aids, 'Balbir Pasha' was the brain child of Priti, she also the one who coined the Greenply ad – Savithri featuring the small Sardar child. Priti has to her credit many national and international awards that include wins at New York Festival, Abby and Clio Awards.

Arun Iyer

CCO, Lowe Lintas

One of the most popular and known face of Indian advertising Arun Iyer, has spent close to 15 years in Indian advertising. Having created path breaking campaigns on Idea Cellular, Fastrack, Tanishq, Surf Excel, Kissan, Britannia, Axis Bank, and many more.

Shriram Iyer

National Creative Director, Mullen Lintas

Shriram is the creative brain behind ads like Havells, Fastrack. He has worked with brands like Domex, Chrome, Cif and some businesses of Videocon. His last acclaimed campaign was Suzlon's PALS campaign.

Ashish Khazanchi

Co-Founder, Enormous Brands

The off-beat and hilarious ad, Isko lagadala to life Jhingalala for Tata Sky is the product of his creative Cannes Gold, and everything in between. He has been rated one of the 'Top Twenty Creative People' by Brand Equity and 'The Creative People To Watch Out For' by DNA.

Kartik Iyer

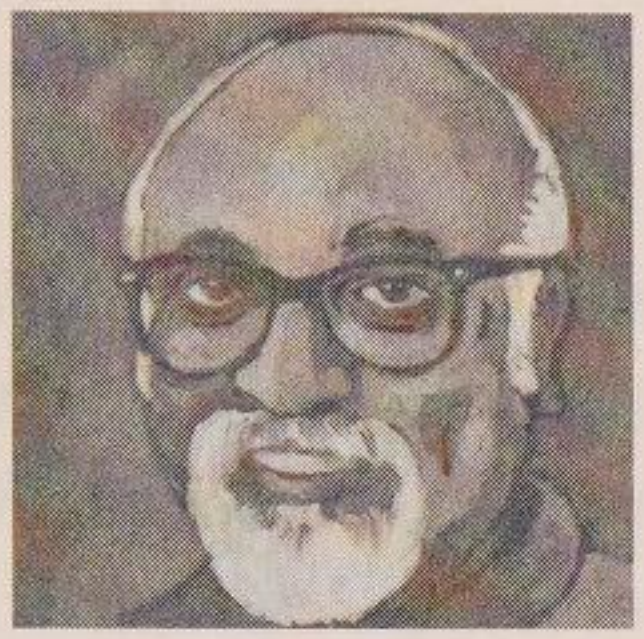
CEO, Happy Creative Services

He is the one who flipped the cart and the result was par excellence ads for the brand Flipkart. A Stand-up comedian. Radio producer. Writer. Actor. In his advertising career he has worked for brands like Worldspace, Titan, Land Rover, Ford and Jaguar.

Parshu Narayanan

Founder & Creative Director, Left Hook -Alternative Brand Engagement

Parshu is the man who crafted the Maruti ads, 'Kitna Deti hai' and 'Kya Karoon Papa Petrol Khatam hi nahi hota'. It is his acumen and knack for insight that makes him a celebrated ad-filmmaker.



K.V. Sridhar (Pops)

Founder & Chief Creative Officer, Hyper Collective

K.V. Sridhar, lovingly known as 'Pops', began his career as a humble Bollywood films billboard painter. Pops was recently named in the prestigious list of Hall of Fame of Asian advertising, media and marketing leaders of the past forty years by Campaign Asia. He has won 22 Cannes lions and over 100 international awards.

* Portrait credits – Portraits are made by KV. Sridhar in his signature style art – iPops.

To watch, enjoy and relive nostalgia, scan the given QR code with your phone. You will be transported to the book's website - www.30secondthrillers.com, where the videos of all the advertisements featured in the book are available.

For individual ads scan the QR code next to the ad snapshot inside the book

** Please note – You need to have the QR Code scanner App downloaded on your mobile phone'*

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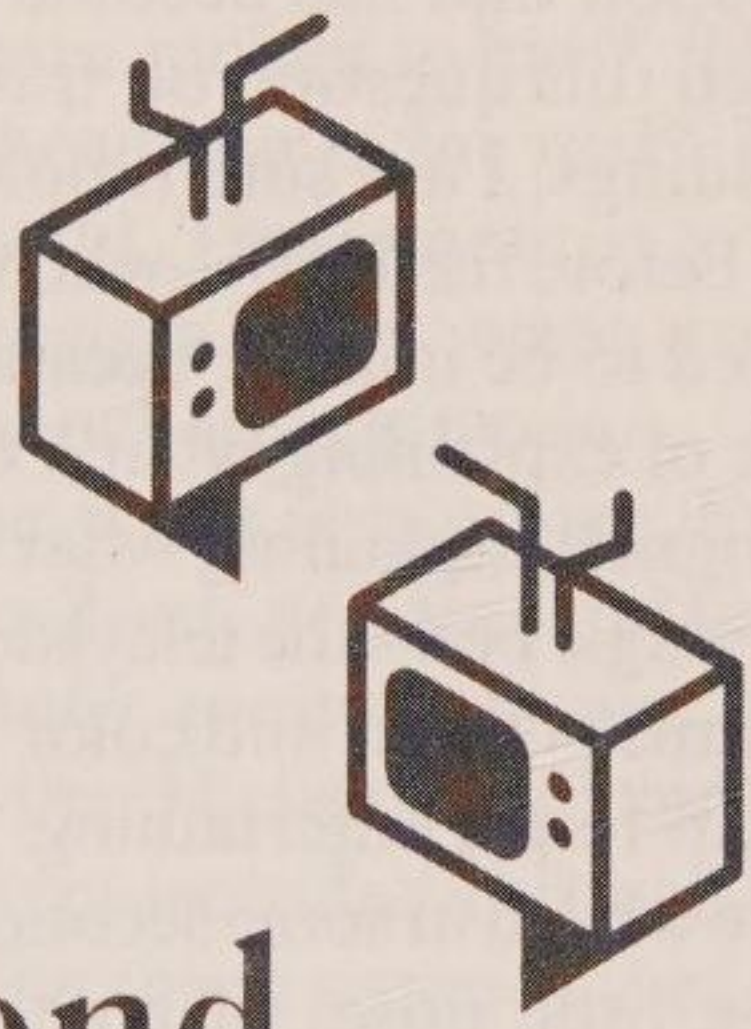


30 Second Connection

The 30 Second Connection

From thought to thrill

My love for conversations is undying; it only grows with every passing one. I love conversing because with it comes the opportunity to observe and meet an insight. For fifty eight years of my life and close to four decades of my career, I have been laden with conversations, each of which have had something interesting to offer. Through all these million conversations, the most common question has been, 'So what do you do?' a question that has become more of a human reflex. I have been asked this question on train journeys, at social dos and even at weddings. I am sure it holds true for you too.

Before the 1980's, whenever I was asked, 'So what do you do?' I used to be in a fix, because with this question, came the tough task of explaining what a Creative Director does in advertising, alongside explaining what advertising is. But in the early 1980's, the magic box - the television set made my job easy. As television became popular and color Television a rage, advertisements also began to get entertaining. Elements like music, stories and fun were woven in some seconds and presented to the audience. With these little doses of entertainment, people started connecting with the products. The face of ads had changed. No longer were they propaganda; simply pushing the product down the audience's throat. Now, they were emotionally sliced moments of life that resonated with people.

So what changed with this? People and their perception of ads did. Love began to foster between the viewers and the ads. Soon, people started finding favorites. Every time they were aired, people savored them with the same enthusiasm over and over again. The jingles soon started getting hummable and the wisecracks increasingly quotable. The music soon became a subconscious tune in people's heads. The actors in the ads became their friends. This is why 'Lalitaji's' advice was valued, why people bonded over 'Mile sur mera tumhara', why friendships were formed over 'Hamara Bajaj'. Because ads were now a reflection of life!

And this emotional connect made my life easy. For now, whenever I was asked, 'So what do you do?', all I had to do, was to refer to one of my popular ads, from 'Wah Taj' in those days to 'Thums Up' today. As soon as I said, 'Have you seen the Wah Taj ad with Zakir Hussain in it?' or 'Have you seen the Thums Up ad with Salman?' The answer is usually an enthusiastic 'Yes!' Faces light up or a spark flickers in the listener's eyes, as soon as I simply state that I have been a part of them. Then, a sudden inquisitiveness is what takes over. A series of questions are asked, each of them with the intent of knowing what happens behind the scenes.

'Zakir Hussain is amazing, have you spoken to him?' 'How is Salman during the shoot?' 'Are those stunts for real?' For them, I become a key to a magical world. They want me to tell them anecdotes, instances and challenges. They want me to share, as to how something they so much love is made.

The love hasn't worn off with time, it has only grown. Even today, we see the insane love for Zoo-Zoos, and have adapted Cadbury Dairy Milk as a way of *shubh aarambh* in our lives and we still celebrate friendship with the 'Har ek friend zaroori hota hai' Airtel Song. The love has transcended through the ages, through genres, through ads. The thirty seconds that we, the world of advertising creatives create with great complexity, is viewed and perceived as a simple dose of entertainment by the viewers and the relationship equation is simply that of love.

People's fascination for ads has always excited me; I thoroughly enjoy sharing my community's experiences with random strangers, who watch what we have created with great vigor. While I will continue conversing at every available opportunity, I am bound by the human limitation of time, opportunity and presence. And thus, I give my passion for conversations a new shape - a book. This book is like a pacifier to my passion and an ode to the love that people have for ads. It is my attempt to converse with every random stranger out there, who has cherished those thirty seconds.

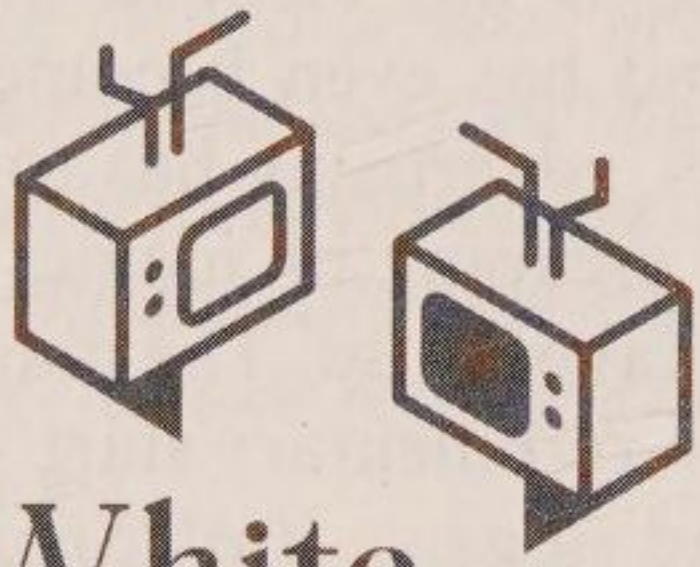
A book that takes the reader to a world where magic is made!

To the world, where the creative oompa-loompas of the advertising scenario work tirelessly to create thirty seconds - those which become a part of their lives. A book that tells the story behind the story - how was it made, when did the idea spark like a bulb, who thought of it and when, the anecdotes, the efforts all of it captured in words. Interlaced with inputs and insights from the makers themselves; a book that covers great ad-men/women, their ads, and its stories. I handpicked the ads that have been loved, cherished and watched and talked about always.

The ads are a mixed bag of nostalgia and new age, we traverse from then to now. My community and I talk of music, celebs, humour, women, youth, emotions, children and how they have been embedded in advertising. We share with you, the interesting pieces of our lives while making ads; we attempt to satiate your inquisitiveness by sharing the stories behind the scenes.

It is you, your obsession and love for ads and the world behind it, which inspires me to unravel these stories. It is with you I speak and share about our world, my world, the advertising world. We tell you how a thought transcends into thrill and how the thirty second connect takes place, between the brands and the people.

So dear reader, dear world, turn the leaf and connect with the thrill of thirty seconds.



The Black & White Connection

The Black and White Connection

If I have to communicate the power of advertising through an anecdote from life, an interesting picture surfaces in my memory – that of a mother feeding her child during the commercial break. I have seen and heard, many mothers narrating the act of feeding their kids. In their maternal experience, the only time when their little ones ate quietly, without any protest was when a thirty second thriller unfolded on their Television sets. Mothers then and mothers now, have used ads as a tool to accomplish their toughest tasks. Such is the magic of advertising - it captivates and it entertains.

The magic has blended into our lives, for the last four decades and has even become a reflection of it. In the last forty years, advertising has touched each one of us, with no one really escaping its magic. Each of us has some memory about our favorite ad. The magic of advertising finds its roots in the most rudimentary start – Slogans. It began with catchy rhymes and slogans. *'GoldSpot – The Zing Thing', 'Whenever you see colour think of us – Jenson & Nicholson'* and many others were the first face of advertising in India. Pictures paired with catchy slogans, printed in the newspaper was the format it all began with. This went on till the potential of moving pictures was discovered.

In the middle of the 1970's, around 1976-1977, audio and visual (moving pictures) were recognized as elements of advertising and were blended together to create commercial ad films. The first pedestal for commercial ad films was the 70 mm screen - Cinema. In 1976-1977, cinema advertising took off. The silver screen has witnessed Suresh Oberoi, driving down the ghats of Ooty and saying, 'Relax have a Charminar'. Food, Friends & Thums Up, and the entire colour coded orange of GoldSpot were some of the most popular Cinema ads of the time. Cinema became the playing ground for many advertisers and the creative community understood how to use moving pictures and sound.

Slogans gave way to jingles while the use of music too, became prevalent and with this, radio as a medium was

conceived. It was an exciting phase, the power of cinema was discovered, and advertisers were exploring it. There were people like **Alyque Padamsee** of Lintas who learnt the art of tapping this medium.

Lintas and Hindustan Unilever were the first movers and gave shape to the medium. Hindustan Unilever used to make fifty-one ad films per year. Alyque was involved in all, I asked him if he could recollect an incident from the days of cinema commercials, to which he laughed and narrated a story related to one of the cinema ads for Lux soap. *'We were making a commercial for Lux which featured the South Indian actress Priyadarshani. The film required her to dance in the center of a circle made of fireworks, "the anaars' and while the camera was rolling, she stepped on one of them and burnt her feet a bit. Her mother created a ruckus over it and the shooting came to a standstill. I then talked to her mother, convinced her and finally, it took us five days to complete the shoot of that commercial. I remember, we had installed large smoke repelling machines to keep the environment free of smog'.*

Cinema as a medium came in vogue and soon, it paved the way for the next big thing - the screen that resided in each home. Unlike the digital generation of today that is born with television by their side, most of us have a special sense of nostalgia attached to our first television experience with Doordarshan. I vividly remember how its circular logo was formed in slow, deliberate animation, the words 'Satyam Shivam Sundaram' as the footer and Indian classical music piece as its signature tune.

It started with a very ancient and basic approach, both; in terms of technology and in terms of content. Low power transmitters were used to air the content. These low power transmitters were installed only in the metros and some small towns. As for the content, it was more educational. Television then was used as a tool to educate people and create awareness. Programs like 'Krishi Darshan' dominated the content, coupled with news. In the name of entertainment, a handful of soaps and a bit of drama was weaved in, which was mostly regional, conceived at a very small scale.

In the early days, the presence of television was restricted to a few cities like Mumbai, Delhi and the smaller villages were connected with the Low Power Transmitters (LPT's). The LPT's started expanding to more states and this gave way to two kinds of networks, regional and national. But 1982-1983, were the years that heralded a sea change; in these years, two major events happened. The Asian Games in New Delhi and the launch of colour television in India. I played an active role in launching the advertising campaign for the first colour television in India - Apsara TV for the Government-owned Electronic Corporation of India (ECIL).

As the reach of television increased, development of content also picked up. Television now became a national phenomenon. No longer was it restricted to community squares, it started entering homes and became a family member. Further, as reach increased, even programming began to change and as the 1980's approached, the entertainment quotient kept increasing. Soaps, musical shows, stories all started coming alive on the technicolour screen. Even today, I miss the vintage shows it aired, the epics - Mahabharata and Ramayan, Chayya Geet, the mysterious Byomkesh Bakshi, the innocent Malgudi Days, Buniyaad, Nukkad, Rajni and the regular news intervals.

With the advent of such content, was ushered in a new revolution, wherein brands began to advertise themselves on television. Lintas-HUL and FCB Ulka-Godrej were the pioneers in this space. The Government of India was clueless about how to commercialize the medium. That was when experts like **Sam Balsara** stepped in and introduced the thirty-minute slot-system. thirty minute time-slots were sold to brands, wherein they were required to create content and also use the same time to air their commercials. This is how sponsored programs came into being. Two legendary advertising individuals - **AG Krishnamurthy** aka AGK and Alyque Padamsee share some tales of yore. And as they talk about the world of channels and advertising in general, we are compelled to bring forth the many popular, and much- loved ads of that time. The conversation is truly a walk down memory lane.

The Nostalgia Lane

One very important name from the Doordarshan days that introduced a sense of commercialization and supported the national channel, in transcending the information space into programming, was Mudra Videotec. Somewhere back in 1984, Mudra Videotec was created and for the next ten to fifteen years, it heralded entertainment on national Television. AG Krishnamurthy was at the forefront of setting up Mudra Videotec.

AGK tell us how did it all start?

'Back then, India as a country barely had any facilities that enabled it to produce quality television software. The gap troubled us and thus, I got in touch with a veteran television technologist. We travelled to London together and availed some latest television studio equipment. It took some days for the equipment to be imported, whilst we identified the right people to set up a team and also we set up the most advanced studio of those times at Dhobi Talao, Mumbai. It all started when West Indies came to India for a cricket series and Doordarshan decided to telecast it LIVE. And with this, came the opportunity to commercialize.

We approached Doordarshan with the idea, that since, you are heading towards commercialization, let us sponsor. We had several meetings with them and finally they let Vimal sponsor, so we began airing the technology commercial of Vimal, where the factory and machinery were portrayed. It became the first commercial on Doordarshan. And with this, started a whole new television revolution.

Popular family serials, music shows, international events, women's programme all were brought to the Indian television by Mudra Videotec. Rajani, Buniyaad, Udaan, Paramvir Chakra were some of the legendary shows telecasted. We also created a show called, Hot Tracks which was a weekend program that showcased the latest chart busters from the western music genre it ushered in a whole new cult."

Any unforgettable incidents that happened back then during the Mudra Videotec days?

'Oh! Yes … one incident is like a legendary story for me. We had produced India's first telefilm, "Janam", which was directed by Mahesh Bhatt. The movie was brilliant. It was being aired but in between the movie, Doordarshan would break for the News Bulletin, which was telecasted daily at 9:00 PM. It so happened that the then Prime Minister of India, ***Smt. Indira Gandhi****, watched the film and when the 9:00 PM news was about to interrupt the film, which was culminating into its climax, she made a call to Doordarshan to check about the duration for the film to get over. She was informed it was about 8-10 minutes, so she requested Doordarshan to delay the news-telecast and instead continue to air the film to its end. And for the first time in the history of Doordarshan, the news bulletin was delayed by 8-10 minutes. Those were the days that television shows enjoyed 90 – 92 per cent viewership'.*

As AG Krishnamurthy shared nuances and incidences pertaining to Mudra Videotec, we also had Alyque narrating some anecdotes of the days, when Television was more like a family member. *'The first sponsored commercial we did on television was for Surf, called "Surf ki mashoor mahek'. It was a quiz show. This started somewhere in late 70's and early 80's. I remember, we had added a little twist to the show, where we used to call guests on the show and the audience would ask questions to them. We had* Niharika *the astrologer and for painting and art, we had invited* MF Hussain.

A very interesting incident happened post his episode was aired. MF Hussain called and told me that it was because of me and the show, that he was now recognized as painterwallah. Intrigued, I asked what was he trying to say. It was then, that he narrated what had transpired. He was walking on the streets of Bangalore, when a school bus passed by him and the kids in the bus recognized him from the show. Evidently excited, they began to squeal, t 'Arey! Painterwallah – Painterwallah'.

Similarly, we had also created the show called 'Karamchand Jasoos' with the help of the students of Pune Film Institute.

It was a raving hit and it made Pankaj Kapoor *and* Kitty *the ruling stars. The act of his chewing a carrot was a rage, so much so that restaurants in Delhi and Mumbai started serving a special 'Karamachand Carrot Soup'. We had fought with the Doordarshan authorities to get an extension for the show.*

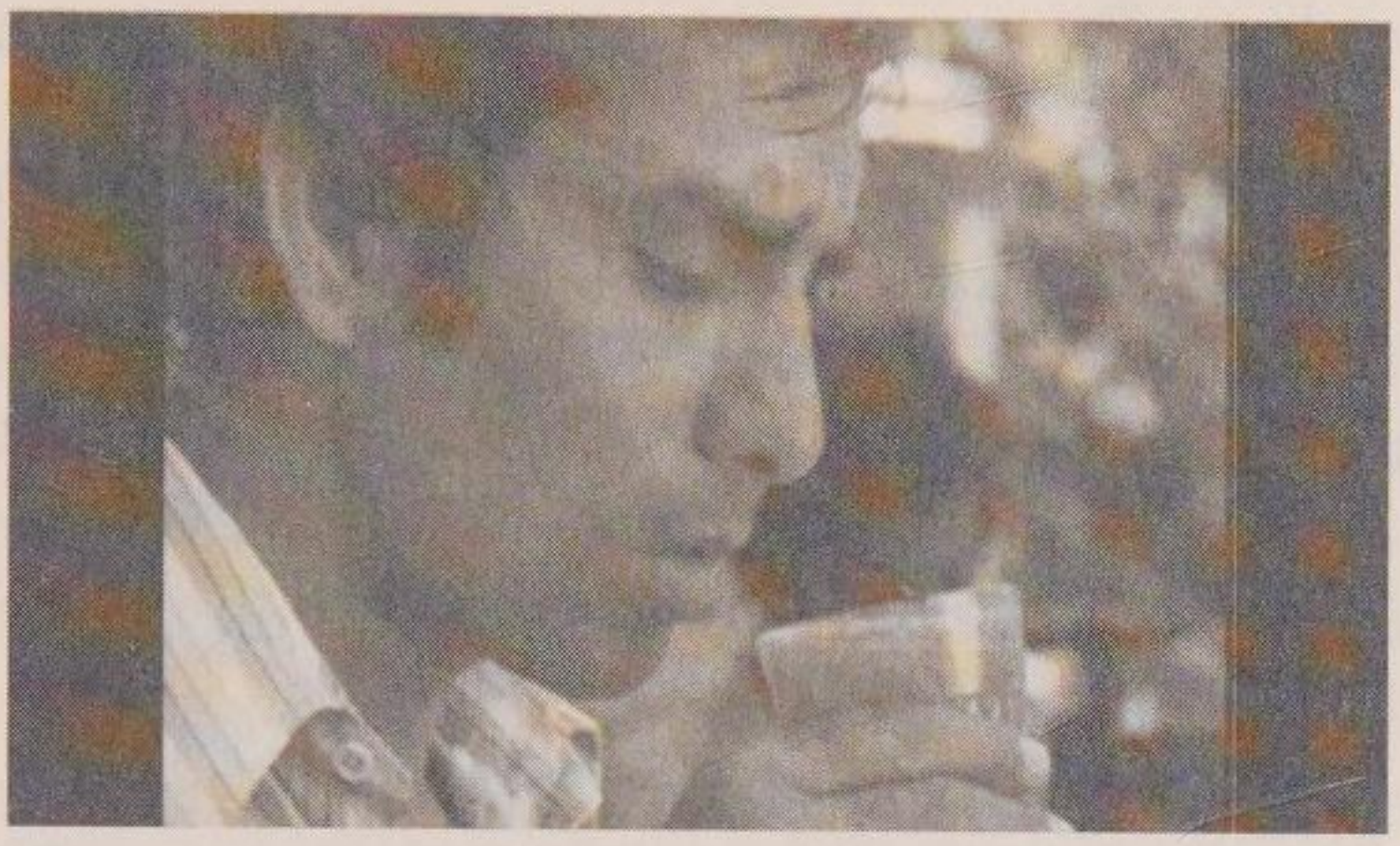
As the sponsored programs flourished, the impact of television became evident. Daily soaps, social drama and epics like Ramayana and Mahabharata were the real anchors of the medium then. Soon, the brands too, began experimenting with television. Procter & Gamble came into India and went big on television. Needless to conclude, television had become the new face of FMCG brands in India.

In fact, my romance with television started on an auspicious note - with the blessings of Ramayana's Sita, by Ramanand Sagar. I was fortunate to do my first commercial with Deepika Chikhalia, who played the role of Sita. This happened in the early 1980's, for a brand called Happy Home – ready-to-eat food. As I remember, my first commercials that were aired on DD, filling in more memories are Alyque Padamsee, AG Krishnamurthy, Kailash Surendranath and Shantanu Sheorey, who share some brilliant stories behind some vintage ads.

Alyque started the journey with a Cherry Blossom Shoe Polish ad, which gave way to the iconic Cherry Charlie, a mascot that has stayed with the brand ever since. An ad that seemed like a scene right out of a Charlie Chaplin film, created a whole new affinity for Cherry Blossom. *'I have always been a great fan of Charlie Chaplin and back then, we had got the mandate of making an ad for Cherry Blossom. In our research, we found out that the sale of Cherry Blossom was stagnant because the shoe polish had already captured 90 per cent of the branded shoe-polish market and the youngsters had a weird perception about polishing shoes. They felt "ki yeh to naukaron ka kaam hai" (this is a servant's job).*

I felt, that the way to break this perception would be to provide the act of polishing shoes a certain status along with the dose of entertainment. That is when the idea of using Charlie Chaplin as a character came about. I had noticed that almost every Charlie Chaplin movie had at least one shoe polishing scene, thus I used it as a leverage and weaved a Cherry Blossom story around it. The ad truly amused the audiences! We had ***Rajesh Puri*** *play the Cherry Charlie role. Back in those days models were treated like stars. This is how the famous Cherry Charlie came into being".*

As we talked about Alyque's most successful campaigns of yore, a slew of **public service campaigns** came up in the conversation. Some were so effective that they led to protests. He shared how a campaign against **roadside sugarcane juice** caused quite a stir. *'The then Municipal Commissioner* ***Jamshed Kanga*** *called me and said, "Alyque, you have created many successful public service campaigns ... why not make one for me too?" I said "Okay" and enquired about the cause. He briefed me about the issue of the increasing instances of diseases like Typhoid, Cholera, Dysentery, and Jaundice and he attributed this to the roadside sugarcane juice stalls. Understanding the issue we made a very simple documentary style ad where we shot a real "Ganna walla" who is winding the sugarcane in his roller machine.*



The machine is rusted, so is the galvanized aluminum sheet on which it is falling and the background is just filled with the noise of flies buzzing. The constant, "zzzz…zzz" buzz of flies gives out a sense of discomfort, finally the vendor pours the glass of juice and hands it over to the customer. When the customer is about to drink, we see a fly on the glass, and freezes with a sense of disgust. This is followed by the tagline, "Only for Rs. 5 a glass you can buy Jaundice, Cholera, Typhoid and Dysentery". This is what we made of the brief'.

What was Mr. Jamshed Kanga's reaction?

'His instant reaction was in the entire ad you haven't once said,"don't eat street food, and don't eat open food". I replied, "I have very much done that". I felt that we as humans suffer from an urge to do something which we are told not to. So I decided to let the visuals speak for itself. In fact, when we were shooting, the shot where the fly is settled on the glass was a complete coincidence. On the editing table my editor said we have shots without the fly in the frame, should we use those? I said, "No! Let us keep the fly as it is! The ad was only done for Mumbai and no other city"'.

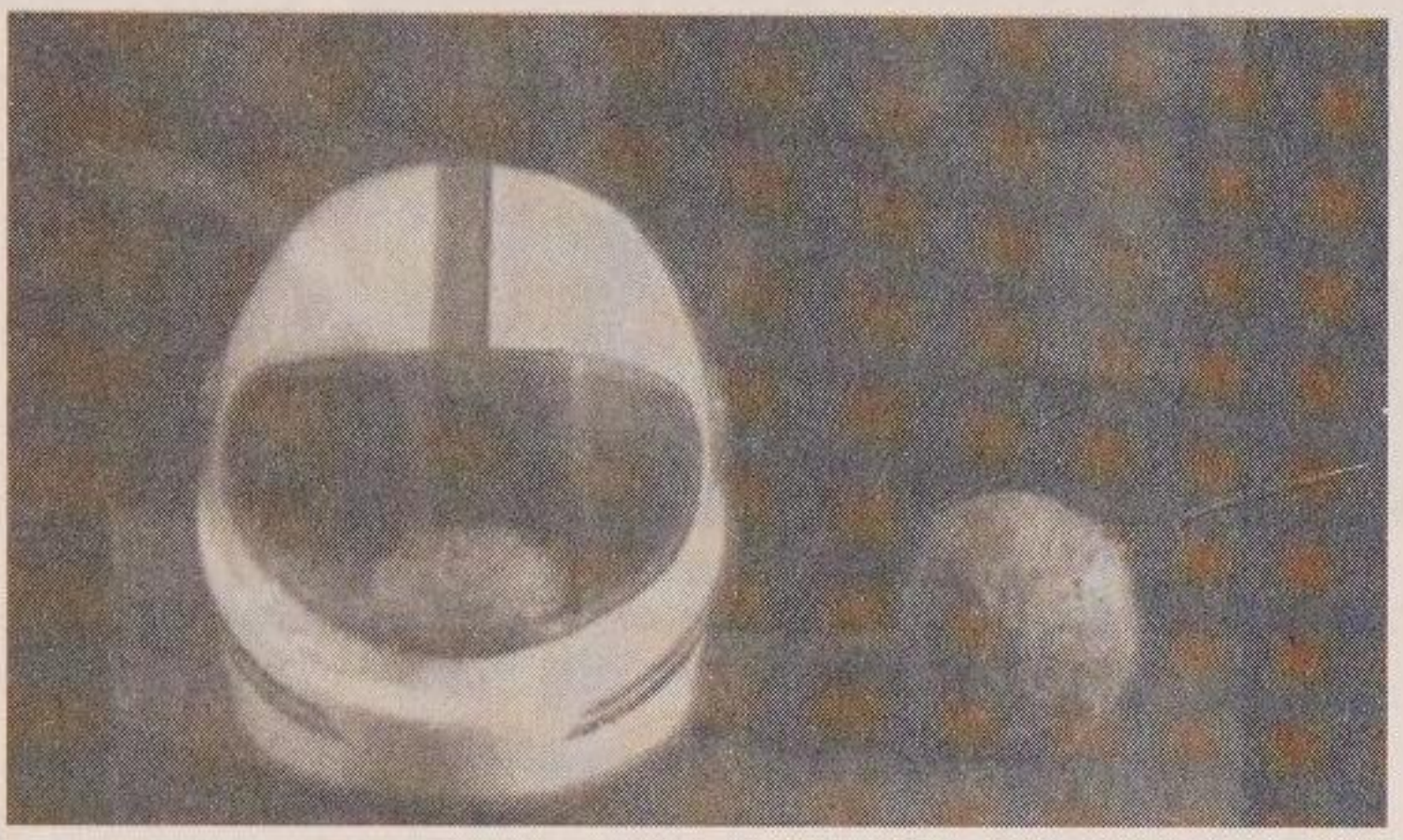
Was Jamshed Kanga convinced about the effectiveness of the ad after it was released?

'Yes! He was and how. One day my secretary came running into my office all hassled and said, "Mr. Padamsee there is a problem. We have a huge morcha (demonstration/protest) happening outside our office" I was a bit baffled and asked, "Who are they?" and she replied, "They are the Sugarcane Juice Vendors' Association". I approached the group and they inquired, "Sahab aapne woh gaane ka juice wala ad banaya hai?" (Have you made the Sugarcane juice ad?), "Haan maine banaya hai" (yes, I have made it) I replied. "Sahab usko bandh karo, humko pasand nahin hai" (get it off air) they demanded. Taken aback I asked, "Kyon" (Why?), "Sahab iski vajah se humara business 50 per cent down ho gaya hai! Log abhi aata nahin aur bolta hai yeh peene se bimaari milegi! Toh isko bandh karo, varna aap aaj ghar nahin jaa sakte!' (Due to this ad, our business has been dipped by 50 per cent. Customers have stopped coming because they believe they will fall ill. You stop the ad right now, else we won't let you go home) they threatened.

I simply called up Jamshed Kanga and told him I am sending a group of people to your office as they have some work. I directed the crowd to take this issue up with Jamshed Kanga, the Municipal Commissioner, whose office is near the VT station and assured them that he is the right person to talk to, about this ad. In a few hours I got a call from Mr. Kanga. He was livid., "Alyque what have you done! This group you sent has surrounded me and they are not letting me go home and demanding to get the ad off air." "You are the boss Mr. Kanga, I will do as you say".

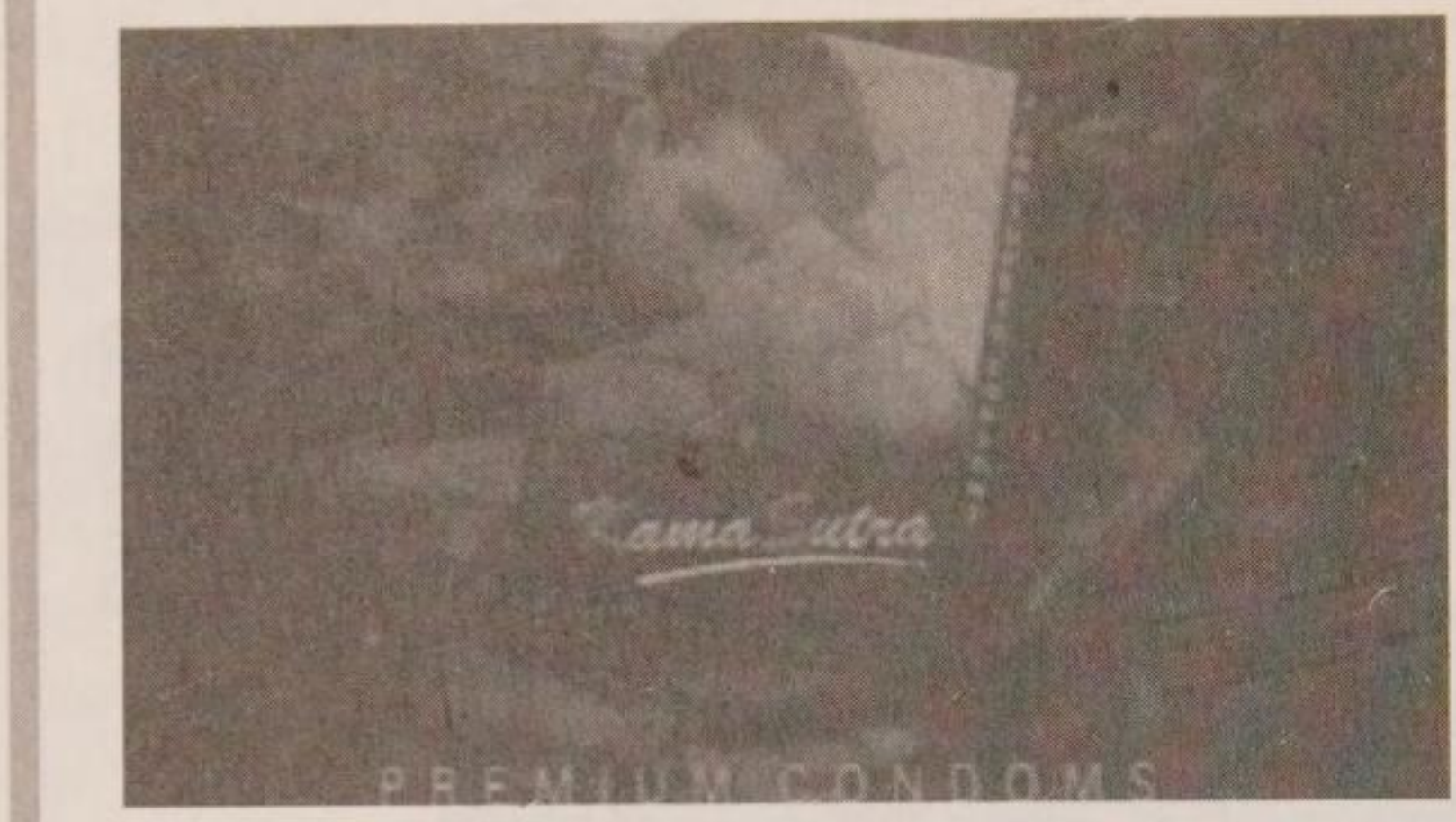
So he ordered me to get the ad off air, I called the distributor and followed suit. Initially he said we would do so for a few weeks but later, he never let it air. Such was the impact of the ad, for the first time a Public service campaign generated commendable effect in such a short time. As advertisers, we just don't motivate people to buy products we also motivate them to buy ideas'.

Your public service campaign for helmets too was a great success …



'What worked for the helmet was its sheer straight forward message, "It's your choice … after all, it is your head". But yet again, this creative relevance is out of authority's comprehension. The Police commissioner after seeing the ad said, 'Mr. Padamsee, but not once have you said "wear helmet" you have to use this. I simply asked him to let the ad air and see the effect. After much convincing he complied and the effect was obvious … even today people remember the ad'.

I agree, back then to manage every rigid perspective was a challenge, especially when our society was at a juncture where so many things were a taboo. In a space like this, you managed to create a spectacle like Kamasutra.



Tell me some stories about how you spun this one?

'Pops! One day ***Gautam Singhania*** *came to Lintas and told us that my father* ***Vijaypath Singhania*** *has given me an assignment, he wants us to foray into production of Condoms, and for marketing the same we need your help. We as a team started off from there - our first step being research.*

We spoke to a small group of about 200 people, aiming at extracting qualitative feedback on condoms. The unanimous opinion was, "Condoms! Sheeee! It's a dirty rubber!" Back then, the only condom available was Nirodh; it was the dirtiest product available in the country since the government made it. The product was actually a thick, dirty rubber which was highly unreliable and uncomfortable.

Using this insight as our basis we began brainstorming, the point of discussion was to come up with the apt strategy and approach to popularize condoms. And amidst this discussion a realization dawned onto me and I thought out loud to the team, "Guys! I find one thing very strange. At the time when you are in the act of making love how can something with such a disgusting perception be encouraging? Why can't we have a "Sexy condo""?" Laughter echoed onto this thought because no one believed that a condom could be sexy! And this reaction strengthened my conviction of the approach we will take, that of a sexy condom.'

'Sexy condom' sounds quite interesting, what unfolded next?

'The next task was to come up with a brand name for the Condom, which the Singhania's would produce. The name we finalized was, "Kamasutra" because it is synonymous to not just sex, but it means sex with status. Kamasutra is equivalent to the intricate art of lovemaking it is exotic. Once the name was decided, we started referring to the book Kamasutra to find out all the ways in which a man arouses a woman. So the condom 'Kamasutra' now became an image of a caring man, a man who offers passionate sexual gratification.

We began with a print campaign in magazines, where we decided to conduct a photo shoot in Goa. The print ad with stills of a man and a woman in an intimate position was conceived with a sample condom stuck on the center on the page. We were to now decide on the models. Gautam suggested Pooja Bedi.

Back then, she was not yet a film star, just a gossip item and famous for her sexy looks. So we zeroed on to her. As for the male model, we found Mark Robinson perfect, although he wasn't a known face but his looks fit the bill. And then, we went on to make an ad film which had sensuous shower scenes all of it communicating, "Kamasutra condom as a tool of pleasure". We made the film and sent it to Doordarshan and they blatantly denied airing of the film. "We can never show this film on our channel, it is disgusting". Fortunately, that was the time when satellite Television had just started and so they decided to air the ad.'

So Doordarshan took offence, any other such harsh feedbacks?

'Yes! I was called by the advertising standard council, ASCI. I met them and the Chairman fumed, "Mr. Padamsee, we are extremely upset with you. We believed that you are that rare person in advertising who has always supported what is correct in advertising! Now you have created this ad that communicates that condom is about pleasure in love making. I am ashamed that you used such words." I calmly replied , "Mr. Chairman, if condom is not for making love … then what is it for, blowing balloons?

You buy a condom when you want to make love, and for youngsters, pleasure is essential. The tagline simply states the truth, who in this room can deny the fact that we use condom for the act of making love! Through this ad, we are just saying that our condom has a certain appeal. It's a good-looking condom; available in many varieties like dotted, extra thin and thus, it offers safety with pleasure. I believe, this will change the entire scenario of family planning and STD diseases in India." I simply delivered my belief and truth and left. And we all know the wonder Kamasutra as a brand and its ad has created.'

Taking the nostalgic vein, AG Krishnamurthy and **Shantanu Sheorey** doled out anecdotes of the revered ad Only Vimal. AGK tells us how the line Only Vimal was coined, while Shantanu tells us the crazy string of events that unfolded with **Vivian Richards**, **Ravi Shastri** and **Allan Border** during the shoot of the ad.

Fabric Tales

'It changed the way Indians perceived fabric and Reliance as a company, a brand that sponsored the 1987 Cricket World-Cup.' AGK started off by sharing the impact that Vimal, as a brand, had managed to create. The ads of Vimal and the line 'Only Vimal' gave Indian-made fabric an entirely new dimension, that of style and status. Conversing further we reached its roots.

The line 'Only Vimal' how did this legend happen?

'Back in 1978, Vimal as a brand had started gaining some reputation. Back then, Raymond's was a huge name and a tough competitor. To make way in the market, Vimal decided to launch a huge campaign. So the team made a big budget ad film, wherein they shot with helicopters to position Vimal as a larger than life brand. The process was - once they shoot the ad, before approaching Dhirubhai Ambani, they would run the ad through me, and if I approved it we would show it to him.

Frank Simoes *was behind this entire campaign, the first ad was shown to me, and I simply told Frank that this ad has a beautiful body but it has no soul. I found it very plastic. Since a lot of money had been spent, Frank insisted we at least run it through* ***Dhirubhai Ambani*** *once, so I agreed. After he saw the ad he looked at everyone's faces and then turned to me and asked, "AGK what do you think?" I said, "It looks good but it lacks soul". He then turned to Frank and asked, "What do you think?" To which Frank replied, "I agree with AGK's point of view"".*

Then what happened?

'Frank said, "I would come back with an entirely new campaign". And what he came back with was the line "Only Vimal", a campaign that ran for about 25 years.'

Vimal as a brand manifested into one of the most memorable campaigns that had legendary cricketers, in their candid avatar on screen. Shantanu Sheorey, who was the director of the ad, amused me with some truly memorable stories and here I share some.

'Pops! The Vimal ad came to me through AG Krishnamurthy and I believe that without his perseverance, this ad wouldn't have been possible. AGK and I shared a great equation. I remember he telling his team , "Call Shantanu, give him the brief and leave him alone. No one needs to attend the shoot too". It started with a copy writer, writing some lines for the ad in Ahmadabad. The lines were in the following context, "If Ravi Shastri is not bowling maidens, then he is doing ..." and "If Vivian Richards is not smashing people out of the stadium ... what he is doing". It had a typical advertisement construct to it, but I felt the need to experiment and do something that is fun and entertaining, since it was going to be about cricketers. I shared the idea with AGK, he simply said "Here is the script ... you treat it the way you want to".'

The creative camaraderie of those times was truly unique, so what happened next? How did you decide to treat the given script?

'One thing I knew was that if you work the script way with cricketers, you just cannot extract any fun. Cricketers aren't actors and back then, they were completely undisciplined when it came to advertising, they always had a complacent attitude. I was to shoot with Ravi Shastri, Allan Border and Vivian Richards. As for Ravi we were buddies and he truly respected my time. When we were shooting him, I got an idea that I will take a shot where all three are together. I called up AGK at 9:00 PM and shared the idea. He simply said, "Go ahead! I will take care of the budget part".

Now what I needed were three tuxedos; one for each of the cricketer. I called up Akbar who was a tailor based out of Tardeo, Mumbai. He had done plenty of suits for us. He had Allan Border's and Ravi's measurements too. But he did not have Vivian Richard's measurement and it was impossible to getthem from him. So literally on the phone he asked me, "Uska chaati kitna hoga?" (What will be his chest size?) Looking at the man's huge frame, I made a wild guess and told him forty-six inches. As for the rest of the measurements, he took a guess looking at Vivian Richard's photographs. I had given standing instruction to the tailor that I want all the three suits the next day, early morning, at Delhi. I told him to work overnight, catch

an early morning Air India flight and come to Delhi with the suits. He complied with the same. But in all this mess there had to be some issue. Apparently Ravi's pants turned out to be short in length, so as a quick fix I told my camera-man Chang that we will not take shots below the knee level.

Somehow we completed Ravi's shoot. The next was Vivian Richard. The challenge was to shoot everything in the time span of 6:00 AM to 8:00 AM max, since Vivian Richards would only be available for an hour. He had to be present at the stadium, dot at 9:00 AM, because ***Rajiv Gandhi*** *was going to open the gates to the World Cup at that time. Ravi assured me saying* ***Sunil Gavaskar*** *will ensure his presence since he was the person co-ordinating on behalf of his company PMG. I had spoken to Sunny about it and he too assured the same.*

So the next day we got up at 5:00 AM and lit up the entire set, we also had extra lights the plan was to complete everything at jet speed. Then, the three of them arrived and we shot, but now we had to do individual shots with Vivian. He said we can do the same in the afternoon, after the match. So in the afternoon to shoot Vivian, we were all ready. We had lit-up the entire lobby of the hotel where we were shooting. We waited and waited and then we realized that Vivian had disappeared. I sat the entire evening at the Taj Hotel and no one knew where he was. The day ended. The next day, yet again, I set up everything and waited but there was no sign of Vivian. This went on for four continuous days.

I called up Sunny and he simply said, "That's Viv!" I was flummoxed, I told AGK about it, who said, "Relax its okay. You come back". So we cancelled the shoot and returned home. We were a bit disappointed that we did not get his solo film.'

You guys waited for four days and no sign of him! How did you manage to get him then?

'Don't ask, Pops! The agency kept chasing him and figured out that he was in Jaipur, playing with England and that, we could catch hold of him there. I rushed to Jaipur with my entire team and met him at Taj. He took me to the room where he was put up. Let me share something very quirky about Vivian Richard!

Wherever he travelled, he used to take his personal musician along. His name was Rege and he used to stay with him, in his room, entertaining him with his music, whenever he wanted.

At Jaipur, we were put up at another hotel of Taj, because the same hotel where Vivian was placed did not have enough rooms. Vivian told me, "Look man! I have my nets at 10:30 AM", so I replied "Okay! We shall start at 6:30 AM ... but we will shoot tomorrow". You won't believe Pops! I had literally bribed the guard who stood at the Taj door, to tell me, if he found Vivian leaving. So the next morning, my entire team was ready and I went to Vivian's hotel at 6:00 AM. Finally, I knocked at his room door at 6:30 AM. Rege opened the door and I asked him about Viv, to which he replied, "Oh! Viv's gone man!" I was flabbergasted and fuming! I went to the lobby, approached the guard and asked him, "Did you see Vivian leave?" "Yes! He just left about half hour ago", he informed. "Who took him?",' I asked, to which he replied, "Nawab of ***Pataudi*** *took him". Apparently, Pataudi had taken Viv for an interview.*

Tiger *and I were good friends and so, I called him to enquire about their whereabouts. So he gave us the address of this Palace hotel. I got into the car and went there. No sooner had I reached that Tiger said, "Hey Shantanu! You need this guy ... right?" And everyone was left in peals in laughter. It's then that Viv spoke, "Come on man! Tiger asked for an interview and I can't say no to him. Come on man! Let's go shoot man!" We clambered into our ambassador and drove straight to the shooting venue. Everything was ready at the sets and we finally got to shoot with Vivian!'*

How did you get him to do the little dance, it was epic?

'Pops! That was a trick. I had told Chang; my cameraman that you keep rolling, by just focusing on Viv and keeping me out of the frame. It's then that I had approached Vivian and asked him about the music for the advert. We made him hear it over the headphones. ***Leslie Lewis*** *had done the tracks where we did a Rege style track for Viv, Country music for Allan and Rock for Ravi. He replied, "The track is great man, it's superb". I further nudged, "So do you feel like dancing on it", "Yaa man",*

came his enthusiastic reply. That's when I asked him to do his gig and we got the perfect shot. Had I asked him to dance for the camera … we wouldn't have got the spontaneity.'

He sounds like a task

'Absolutely Pops! There is more! We then had to shoot him in the swimming pool. So, I told Viv about our next shots, which were to be in the pool. His immediate response was, "I am goanna get wet man" As I nodded in affirmative, he whined, "but I don't know swimming man". Thus, we did some simple shots in the shallow side of the pool. The final shot of the ad, was him walking at Queen ***Gayatri Devi****'s palace. He was really excited because he was invited by the Maharani of Jaipur. I had actually called Gayatri Devi in advance, seeking her permission to shoot at her palace, to which she had asked who would I be shooting with. Upon learning that it was Vivian Richard, she had remarked, "Oh! I love that man! Bring him over". We had tea with Her Highness and took a brilliant shot of Viv walking gracefully through the lawns of the palace. And with all this adventure, we were finally able to put together, the ad that made Vimal a legendary brand!'*

Absolutely. Did you have any personal experience, which linked you to this ad?

'Yes! Once I was getting a custom clearance at an Airport and was just carrying an attachment of a light, which I had declared at the customs. Yet, the Custom officer was chewing my brains with his incessant questions. Suddenly, a gentleman walked up to us and said, 'Can I help you? I am Mr. Nair, the Customs Collector.' In return, I introduced myself and said, "I am Shantanu Sheorey" and he was quite surprised, 'Oh! You're the man who did the big Vimal commercial! I love your work. I too, am a photographer!' This set us talking. He then, offered me to have tea with him and also chided the customs officer who was questioning me. I realized then, the sheer impact that my work had managed to create. It was a personal moment of pride.'

As we talk about proud moments and cricketers I am compelled to mention the ad you did for **Cinthol**, which featured the dashing **Imran Khan.**

'Pops! The Imran Khan Cinthol ad was an ad that I made in a record time. ***Parmeshwar Godrej*** *called me and said that she wanted me to redo an ad, for their soap Cinthol. She attributed the reason to the existing one being equivalent to a disaster. And though I had agreed; there was little editing one could do. So, I informed Parmeshwar and explained that the only way I could salvage it, was by re-shooting the ad. She gave her go-ahead. I crosschecked with her about Imran Khan's presence; if he would come again! She said, "He is ready and is in Udaipur. I have already taken his time ... you just rush with your team tomorrow morning, shoot the ad and come back!".*

We had no script in hand. On my way to Udaipur, in the flight, I was thinking of what to shoot and what scenes to capture. Well, we met him only to learn that he was running a 103-degree temperature. Professional that we was, he obliged in spite of his health. We shot a close up; his run up which was really famous and we cut to the soap falling onto the towel. Stitched together, the impact was quite dramatic. And on the spot, I created the tagline, "I use Cinthol, do you?"

Post the shoot, I called ***Manmohan Shetty*** *of Adlabs and told him that I was coming for processing the film. I went there straight and the next morning, I went to* ***Louie Banks*** *and we did an impromptu track. Within forty-eight hours, the film was ready with its final cut. We flew to Delhi and handed over the tape to Parmeshwar and* ***Adi Godrej****. This was the fastest ad that I had done and I had enjoyed every bit of it. In fact, we also did a second in the series with* ***Vinod Khanna****.'*

Yes. I remember the one with Vinod Khanna on the horse. How did that happen?

'When the talks of doing a second film did rounds, Paremeshwar Godrej called me for the meeting. They showed me the storyboard which Mudra had given. It was an approved storyboard and the script surrounding Cinthol, was that of it being a family soap. I wasn't happy with the idea and candidly voiced my opinion to

Parmeshwar. To this, she asked, "What do you have in mind?" I was a bit scared to speak, as the script was approved and we were at the stage of finalizing the budgets. However, because she wanted to know, I voiced, "After Imran, we needed to have another macho man" and randomly asked, "What about your friend - Vinod Khanna?" She was thrilled and called Vinod, explaining that she needed him to do a commercial. That's how Vinod was chosen as the model.

This change did not go well with Sam Balsara and Adi Godrej, since everything was finalized and this was a complete overhaul. However, it was sorted over a healthy debate. Now, I began thinking what is it that we can do with Vinod, which looks macho. So the idea of him riding a horse at a beach occurred to me. I asked if he knew horse-riding and he confirmed that he did. So, we decided to shoot at the Juhu beach, the morning after with sunrise.

We were ready with the set-up by 6:00 AM. However, there was no sign of Vinod. Left without a choice, we waited until 10:00 AM. Finally, I was compelled to call him and he said, "Arey! Shoot during sunset". I said that won't work for the ad. So Paremeshwar intervened and asked Vinod to stay at her bungalow for the night, so that they could go together for the shoot, the morning after. Finally, the next day, the shoot was completed. I asked him, if he wouldbe able to jump onto the horse without the saddle. To this, he had replied in affirmative. We got him dressed in denims and it turned out to be quite a sequel.'

Shantanu, one last story that I want you to share is that of **Madhu Sapre** debuting with the ad of Garden Fabrics. That was a great one too!

'Yes of course! And so was the story. I was in my studio, testing for Garden. We had already shortlisted four beautiful girls and were to be finalizing one of them as the model for the Garden ad. I was busy testing, when my assistant walked-in to inform me about a girl, who had come to see me. He even pulled out a photograph to show me. The same appeared as one clicked at a wedding. Well, I was quite irritated. "We are about to finalize … and you handover a picture like this?" I hollered. To this, my assistant expressed his concern; explaining that she was

not wanting to budge; insisting on meeting me. I stepped out and found a completely vernie looking Maharashtrian girl, dressed in a tracksuit. I greeted her and asked about her. "I am Madhu Sapre", was all she said. "So what do you do?" I probed. "I am a State-level Shot-Put champion". I looked at her face and felt that it was an interesting one - the cut and its features. So I told my make-up dada, "Face achha hai! Thoda make-up aur baal-vaal banao iske"'. Once ready, I shot her life's first portfolio and the output was truly magical.

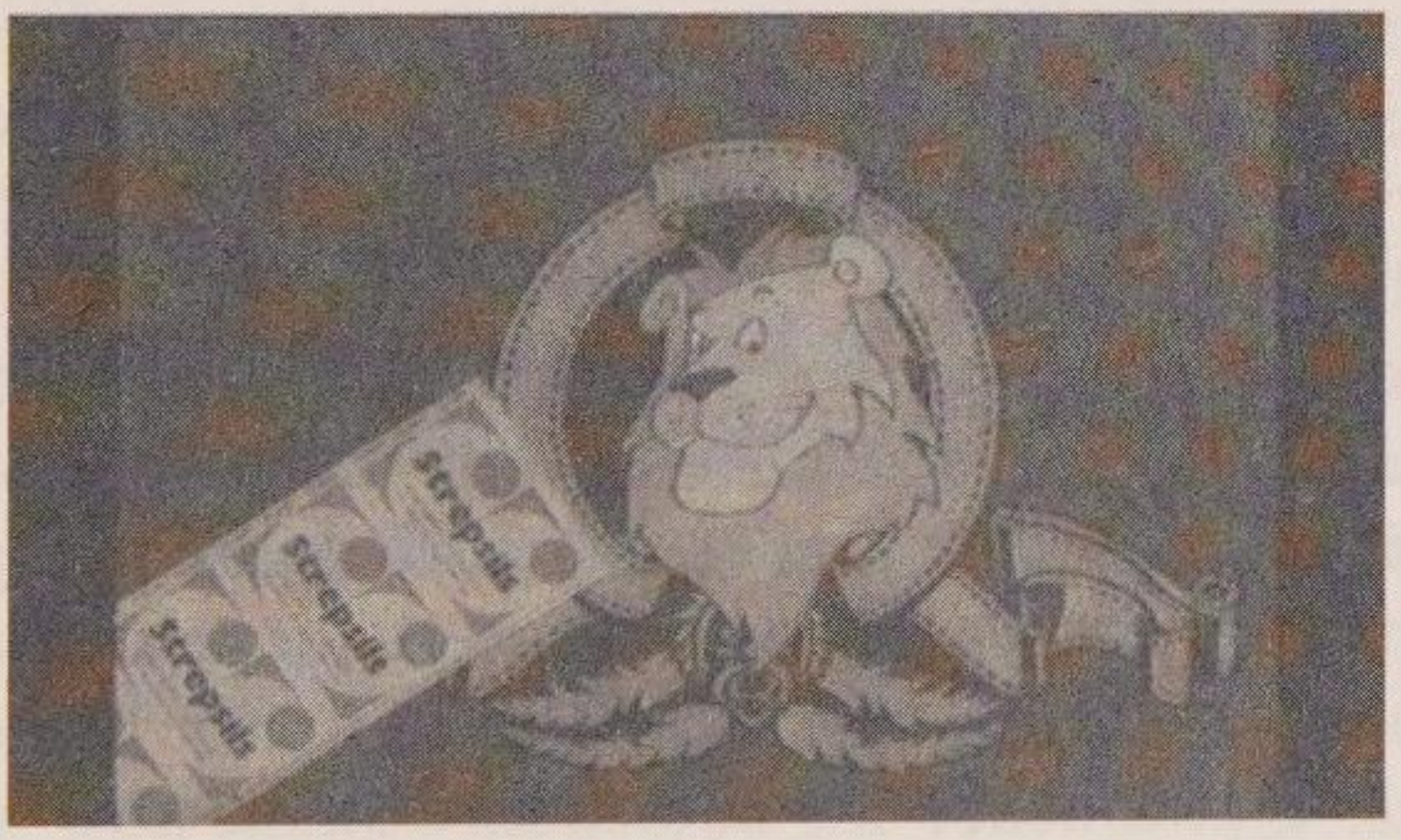
I called up ***Elsie Nanji*** *with whom I was co-ordinating for the Garden ad and told her, that I was sending across some Polaroids. I informed about a stunning girl, who would make our model. Said I, "Please keep every other model on hold as of now". To this, she said "okay" and waited for the photographs. As soon as she looked at them, she was thrilled., "Who is this babe? I want to meet her!" Well, I answered that she would have a wait a bit before she met her.*

Pops! Back then, Madhu hardly could converse in English and knew nothing about modeling. I told Madhu that though we had finalized her, she needed to put these books on her head and pose daily, in front of the mirror. Unbelievable as it may sound, within three weeks, the results were unbelievable. We shot at Banganga in Mumbai and This is how Madhu was discovered. The following year we had ***Aishwarya Rai****.'*

A Roaring Ad

As we talk of yesteryear legends, I include this wit and humour filled film by **Prahlad Kakkar,** where he uses the MGM Lion and its roar, to talk about Strepsils. An ever-enthusiastic Prahlad shares his experience of making the ad. *'This was for Boots Company; for their brand Strepsils.* ***Anil Kapoor*** *was the client and he used to grind agencies to death. He was a very difficult client. He did not have the knack of understanding scripts and his only methodology was to provoke the creative team, until they gave up and went back to changing the script. I think his mod*us operandi was to check if the *team defended*

their creative ideas or not. He used this as a measure to check the conviction, that an agency had in its creative. I was to pitch for Strepsils and it was an experience in itself. The idea was to show the MGM lion with a sore throat, unable to roar. It was to mew like a cat, where-in the the product had to be introduced, following which the original MGM roar would erupt. It was a brilliant idea, but Anil just wouldn't buy it. However, I was adamant and went onto enact the entire ad in front of him. At first I said, "Meow! Meow" like a cat, had a strepsils and then, roared out loud imitating a lion. The man simply cracked up. He walked out of the room because he did not want to laugh in front of us. Thereafter, he *returned with a serious expression and said, "Okay!" Well, they ran the ad for ten years and couldn't find a better replacement. I don't think anyone has had a presentation like that.'*



You often use such gimmicks I know…

'Yes Pops! For the 7up ad, which featured ***Mallika Sherawat*** *and the return of their mascot Fido, I used two coconut shells and literally acted as Mallika. This was during the pitch, where I was trying to communicate the idea.'*

While what we see on screen is entertaining, the stories off-screen are equally amusing.

These campaigns are a reflection of how advertisements were a catalyst to make television a tool of entertainment. Until Mudra Videotec happened, until Alyque sprinkled his brilliance, until sponsored programmes happened and until brands started building themselves through the medium - Television was merely a visual form of information. Slowly, the entertainment quotient was infused and soon, radio jingles morphed themselves into visual doses of entertainment. That's how evolution took place. Stories were weaved, music blended in and messages that touched the audiences became ads!

And as I talk of this evolution that stemmed from Doordarshan, I come to a milestone that gave advertising an entirely new dimension. Thanks to two ads that urged Indians to be Indians and instilled a sense of pride. No matter how long we traverse into the future, these two ads of the past, shall always be legends that we shall keep referring to and learning from. These were ads which exuded a power, bringing the nation together - The Torch of Freedom and Mile Sur Mera Tumhara. My journey down memory lane is empty without exploring these two masterpieces. **Piyush Pandey** and **Kailash Surendranath** became the windows that opened doors to this

kind of brilliance. And yes, as we talked, we missed (late) **Suresh Mallick -** the actual creative heart and soul behind the two ads.

Freedom Ignited

A torch as a metaphor for the spirit of being Indian and all revered sports-people, they come together to reignite the sense of freedom and the sense of being Indian. The torch passes on and so does the infectious spirit. The Torch of Freedom was an ad that evoked pride.

The post-independence phase was turbulent and amidst flux. Indians had lost the sense of pride in being an Indian. Unaware of their own potential and their country's strength, everyone was hesitant and lacked confidence. This dampened spirit was a concern for the then Prime Minister; **Rajiv Gandhi.** He had commissioned a body called Lokseva Sanchal. Under its aegis, Rajiv Gandhi wanted to do something that reignited the spirit of being an Indian. In the process, he met Kailash Surendranath among others and shared what he had envisioned. I met Kailash Surendranath to speak about this legendary campaign and other memorable ads, directed by him.

What was the brief you got?

'This was somewhere back in 1984-1985, a time when an Indian wasn't actually in the progressive space; it was a closed economy. Back then, the unanimous feeling that clutched the nation was that Indian's were not proud being Indians; they were a restricted, self-doubting lot. Thus, Rajiv Gandhi told us to do something which would make the Indian population proud. It was a rather simple brief. Based on this, Suresh Mallick from O&M and I sat at my work-pad in Walkeshwar. We began brainstorming on the next moves. Something that would evoke the 'Mera Bharat Mahan' feel.

One thing which we both loved and were passionate about was Sports. Suresh being older than me, knew all the legendary sportsmen of India, while I was more aware of the contemporaries. So we decided to create an ad with all the famous sports-people passing on the torch. We also were influenced by the ***'Chariots of fire'*** *and this is how we zeroed on to the idea.'*

Once the idea was fixed upon how did you manage the execution? Bringing together so many legends would surely have been a task.

'Yes! It was! We started by writing letters and sending them by post to the varied sports-people we wanted to approach. Back then, there were no mobiles or emails and so, we wrote letters. We simply talked about the idea and voiced that we needed their participation. We also clarified that there would be no finances involved. The sheer tedious way of communication cost us three months; to gather everyone and fix dates and schedules. The plan was so fluid that we were simply going where people were taking us; location wise.

We couldn't make this with a solid plan. The best way was to improvise, as we moved forward with every situation. In some rare instances, we were lucky to get two or three celebrities simultaneously, in one city. For instance, to shoot ***PT Usha*** *we had gone to Chennai. The location was IIT Chennai. At the location, I noticed lots of deers in the campus. So, I told my team this is a one-take chance. I asked PT Usha to run towards the path of the deers and asked my team to make the best of the opportunity. The*

result was that we got brilliant shot of her running with the deers. One more instance of improvisation was, when we went to shoot the Nawab of Pataudi; Tiger. His daughter ***Soha,*** *insisted she too wanted to run and thus, we allowed her. It turned out to be a rather cute shot. Such improvisations added a lot of soul to the ad.'*

Who was the Director of Photography?

*'**RN Rao** was the* Director of Photography. *He was extremely popular back then. Imagine having about 1000 commercials to his credit.'*

The background track and the epic use of our National Anthem's end: How did that happen?

*'**Louis Banks** was working on the track and in one of our discussions, I told him that it would be great if we could end it with the "Jaya He" part of our National Anthem. So, Louis ended with the tune of "Jaya He". We showed this to the officials of Lok Seva Sanchar Parishad and they got all worked up, saying you cannot distort the National Anthem like this; by just using a part of it. I was a bit disappointed and told Louis to make another version. But I decided that I would show both the versions to Rajiv Gandhi. And when I did, he chose the one with "Jaya He" as the ending.'*

What was the kind of response it garnered?

'Pops! It was one of the busiest times of our careers and from it, we had removed a month, to just shoot one ad; debarring the three months that we had taken to prepare and bring everyone together! Which means, that we let go almost four-five ads, for a work that wasn't going to fetch us any money. But at the end, after the ad was telecasted, the response was overwhelming. There was a sudden emotional uproar we started getting pools of letters of appreciation. Such was the impact it created. And what more ... it gave way to yet another legend "Mile Sur"!'

The very next year after 'Torch of Freedom', Lok Seva Sanchar Parishad and Rajiv Gandhi called us for yet another

spectacle. Who knew that that would get etched in the history of advertising and the minds of the audiences forever! Mile Sur was an enigma. Piyush Pandey, who penned the lyrics, got nostalgic as he narrated his experience of working with and for a legend - Suresh Mallick and "Mile Sur" respectively.

One Note. One Nation

Music; its anchor. Diversity; its flavour. "Mile Sur" was an expression made of music and the diverse nation that India is. Many eminent personalities and even common people came together and defined unity, in the most beautiful manner!

Piyush narrates his experience: *'1987 was when Suresh Mallick asked me to write Mile Sur. He had tried out many eminent writers, but somehow, he wasn't finding anything that touched his soul. He wanted something very simple and hence, approached me to write. I asked, "Are you sure you want me to write it?" and to this, he simply replied, "Yes! I think you can do it".*

So I began. After many attempts, I got what he wanted. He approved the lyrics at the eighteenth instance. – This was the end product; "Mile sur mera tumhara, toh sur bane humara. Sur ki nadiyan har disha mein behke sagar mein mile. Badalon ka roop leke, barse halke halke." This culminated into an icon, which is greater than any advertisement that we have seen till

date. Hats off to Suresh Mallick for thinking of an idea like this. I was purely a lyricist for him. It was Suresh who had the entire ad, frame by frame in his mind.'

How did it all begin?

'Suresh along with Kailash had already done the Torch of Freedom for Lok Seva Sanchar Parishad. Now they needed yet another catalyst. ***Bhaskar Ghosh*** *and* ***Shunu Sen*** *were the committee members who were given the responsibility of charging up India. They got Suresh involved in the process. Suresh being a classical music aficionado chose "Music" as the thread to tie it all. I remember back then, telexes were being used. Suresh used to send a room full of telexes to Louie Banks, who made the music track, telling him how would the music turn and manifest into what, at each juncture of the ad. He knew the ad … like the back of his hand.'*

Kailash then shed light on what happened once the lyrics were finalized.

'Once we got the lyrics, the first thing we did, is send it to ***Pt. Bhimsen Joshi****. He pondered over it for two weeks and then, visited us at Louis' studio. As soon as he came, he said, "I have decided on Raag Bhairavi". Saying this, he started singing with his Harmonium and Tanpura; giving us an half an hour recording. He was in a trance and one could not stop him at a stipulated 20 seconds. His recording became the foundation of the track.*

We cut the recording into two parts and extracted 40 seconds, which we decided to use; at the beginning and at the end of the ad. Then we simply gave his recording to varied people like ***M. Balamurlikrishna, Kavita Krishnamurthy and Vaidyanathan*** *to follow. Vaidyanathan was the one who did the ethnic part of the music. Talking of Vaidyanathan, he was another genius. An extremely melodious composer. Pops! You won't believe he used to live with monkeys. He had a house in* ***Babulnath****, which was full of monkeys. Let me get back to the ad for which Louie bridged the entire track. And yet again, the track ended with the "Jaya He" tune of the National Anthem. It had set a new trend.'*

Some stories from the shoot?

"Yet again, it was an act of improvisation, although Suresh had everything clear in his head. However, we kept adding bits and pieces, as and when they were required. One fine day, we decided that we have to shoot Kerala. So we went to Periyar Lake and there we found a Mahaout (Elephant rider). We caught hold of him and asked him to sing the line in his native language,to which he happily obliged. Then we caught an actual newly married couple, who were sailing in a basket-boat in Kerala. In the Punjab shot, Suresh's sister and my brother too, were seated on the tractor and were a part of the frame.

As for the celebrities, we contacted actresses and Television personalities. It is noteworthy that all of them obliged without any monetary involvement. One of the key things at the celeb-front, was to get ***Amitabh Bachchan***, ***Jitendra*** *and* ***Mithun Chakraborty*** *together. It took quite a long time to co-ordinate and set a common date for all three to be present. Each came in their own attire. We shot the scene in fifteen minutes at the Mehboob studio; after-which all three went their ways.*

One person we could not miss out on, was ***Lata Mangeshkar.*** *We wanted Lataji but during the entire schedule, she wasn't available since she was travelling. Thus, until then, we had Kavita Krishnamurthy do her part. Fortunately, at the last moment, we were able to get some time of hers and she featured.*

The presence of ***Kamal Hassan*** *was purely co-incidental. The Telugu part of the ad was being taken care of by Balamuralikrishna. He arrived at the studio and performed his part. Along with him Kamal Hassan had come, as Balamuralikrishna was his guru. We decided to shoot Balamuralikrishna's part at the Juhu Beach the morning after. Kamal simply requested if he could be present, for all that he wanted to do, was just be there. We agreed. All the featured celebs became a part of the ad out of honor. Well, some of them who had asked for money were refused candidly.*

Piyush added an interesting anecdote here, talking about a celebrity who asked for money in return.

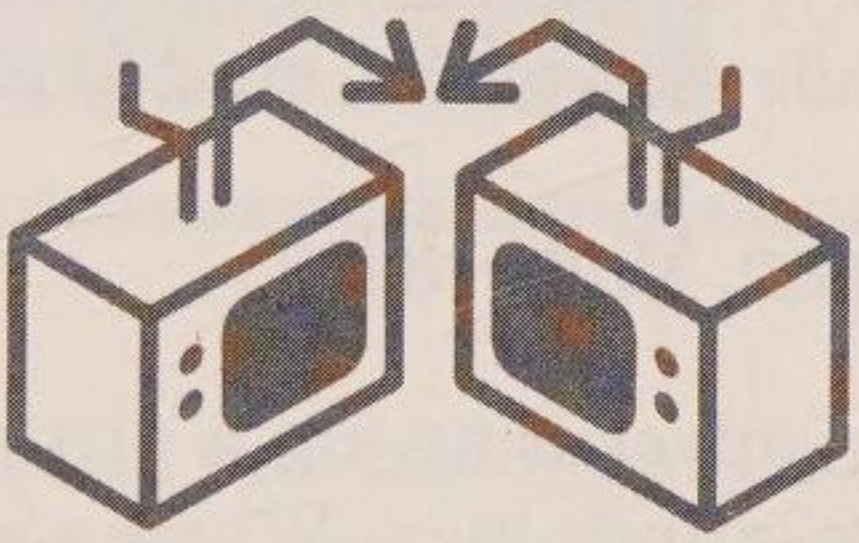
'One of the most eminent cricketers of the yore was contacted and requested to be a part of "Mile Sur". His immediate response

was, "Kitne paise doge?" (How much money shall you give?) Well, we refused and am sure that he regrets this till date.'

Mile Sur like its message, was a well knitted team effort. Though not as popular, there was a third attempt too, "**Raag Desh"**. Suresh Mallick, this time, went all out with his love for classical music. This ad was an amalgamation of every possible classical singer and musician and every possible instrument.

Sharing a bit about Raag Desh, Kailash said, '*Raag Desh yet again, started with the brilliance of Pt. Bhimsen Joshi. It featured the most iconic shot of Zakir Hussain playing with his father* ***Allah Rakha****. We had sarangi and santoor. The ad is an apt reflection of the Classical music legacy which our country possesses. Even today, Zakir Hussain tells me that when he is teaching Indian music and instrument in LA, he uses this ad as a pre-cursor to communicate the depth and vastness of Indian music. Since it was a niche anchor, only people with taste could appreciate Raag Desh.'*

The black and white connection alluded to the start of entertainment on Television screens, making advertising a small part of it. With this, yet another undercurrent of change was unfolding; a change that reflected the social nuances of our society. Advertisements, as they became stories of life and from life too, started to portray idealism and realism.



The Changing Connection

The Changing Connection

The thirty seconds, along with entertainment became a catalyst to social reform. For instance, the Liril ad for the first time, cast a young girl in a bikini and it subtly explored the fifteen minutes of time space for a woman, where she is all about herself - the time in she takes a shower. At the other end we had "Lalitaji" - the smart housewife. Thus, along with the aspect of entertainment, I was also seeking to explore the power of change that advertising holds. I was attempting to etch out the role of women, men and society; a society that had changed and how it could be reflected through advertising. In this journey, we shall come across some ads that reflected the reality, while some which created a new one.

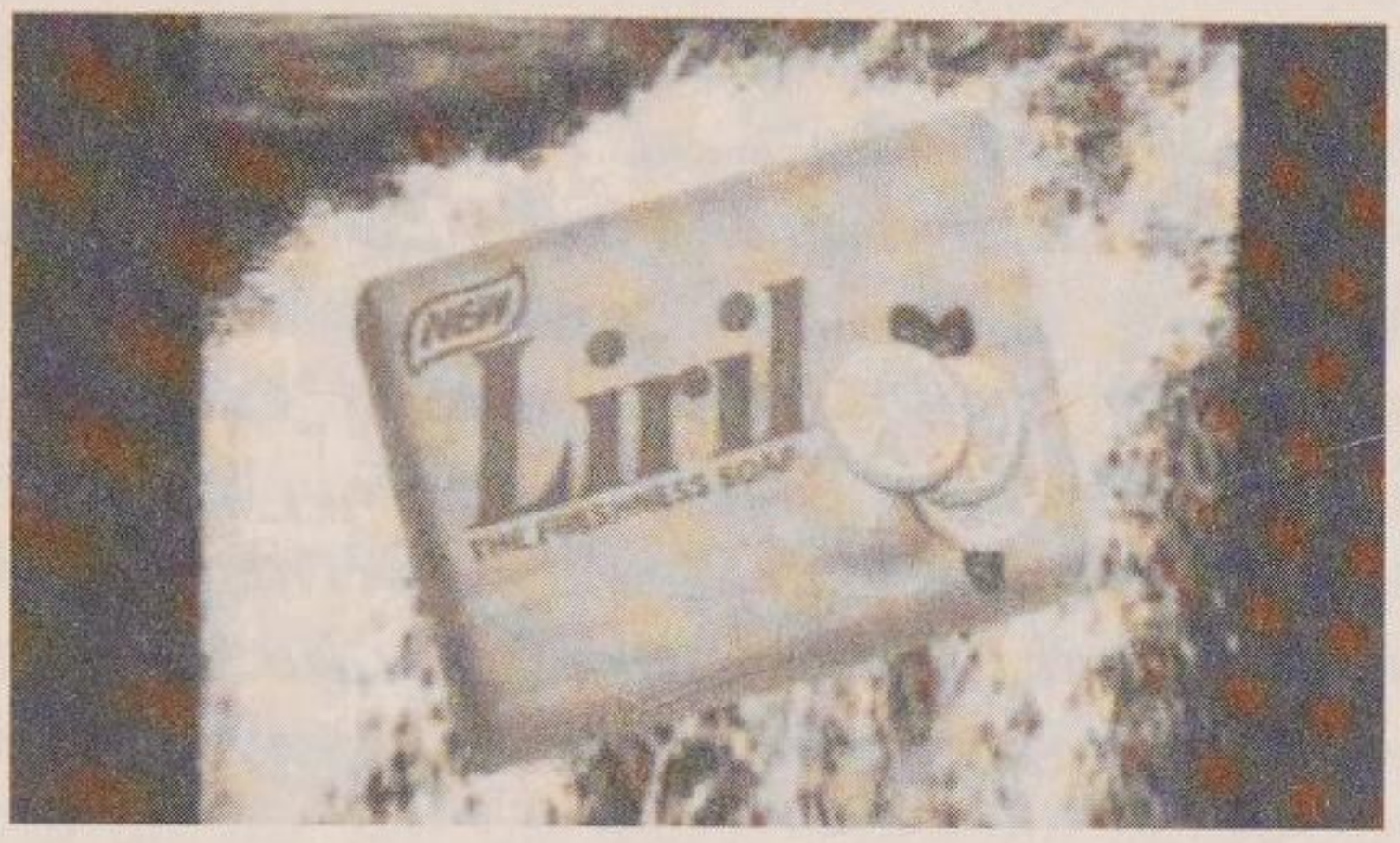
One Woman, Many Roles

Women in advertising are a prism that refracts a rainbow, unraveling infinite hues. Where each shade reflects a change. We see smart economical housewives, young independent girls and wives who are bosses. We see fairness assume a new meaning. We see talent and purpose taking centre-stage and women rising to a new pedestal. I marvel about each of these loving roles of women, by celebrating ads that reflected them and thus, I began with the boldest hue of its time; the Liril Ad, where **Karen Lunel** froliced under a waterfall, clad in a bikini. It was through her innocence, that the very idea of "Freshness" had been spread.

Fantasy filled reality

Unlike today, where soap is a super complex choice, back in the 1980's, "a soap was a soap". It foamed and cleansed. How much of moisturizer it had and which fruits it had, was an irrelevant issue. Soaps then, were about two things - hygiene for boys and beauty for girls. Boys went for the red one; girls chose their vintage pink. But then, Hindustan Unilever's Liril happened. It said "Hey! I'm not just about

hygiene or beauty; I am about freshness!" Liril wanted to tell the world what freshness feels like; not just to the body, but also for the mind.



Alyque Padamsee was entrusted with creating an ad that spoke about freshness. Kailash Surendranath directed the film.

A young, charming girl, clad in a bikini, rejuvenating under a scenic waterfall, singing aloud the Liril tune - the commercial was every woman's fantasy coming alive. In 1980-1981, the Liril ad was actually shot for cinema. It was aired on television in 1982, a time when color television was being ushered in. And the precise moment when color television came in, the first thing the agency, Alyque and Levers did, was to air the ad.

A chord was struck instantly and the ad gained popularity. It wasn't about a bikini-clad girl, or the catchy tune that really clicked. It was the fact that the ad offered a certain degree of personal relief, to every woman. Those were the times when the Indian woman lived more for everyone else, but less for herself. Her entire day was a duty-filled schedule, where she assumed multiple roles. The only time she had for herself, was when she went in for a bath. Those fifteen minutes of her day were her escape route; a route whose destination was her fantasy. Alyque found his muse in this thought and thus, created the Liril Ad. The Ad was about just one simple experience : "Freshness".

To relive the magic of how Liril was made, I had Alyque and Kailash share some really interesting stories of how and what happened back then. *'Neena Merchant and I drew inspiration from the insight that the fifteen minutes of bathing, that any Indian woman and housewife had for herself was the "me time" she had. A visual of a green swimsuit clad girl, flirting and frolicking under a waterfall was our breakthrough. For us, the visual communicated liberation and freshness. Thus, "Come alive with freshness" was the idea. It was a simple idea, no story and no complex problem-solution in it. It was simply about a girl under a waterfall! Thus, we decided to have no sequel treatment; the film would just be a collection of jump cuts. The film Chief was* ***Momi Ismail*** *and the director; Kailash Surendranath.'* Alyque narrated the instance from where it all began.

So how did Kailash become a part of Liril?

'Back then, I had just started out. I had just completed my college and got into direction and production. This was owing to my father, who was already into this space. I remember, I was driving Neena Merchant to Lintas and on the way, we got talking and I told her what I do. She asked me to come and see her at the Lintas office, the following week. The next thing I knew, was that I'm involved in the Liril project. Lintas at that time had just done the packaging bit of Liril and had come up with the film concept. ***Woodham*** *was the Art Director who had designed the packaging. Once I met the team, they gave me the task to find a waterfall and a girl.*

That was the beginning of a crazy ride. My quest took me to the length and breadth of India, in a bid to find the perfect waterfall. I remember taking flights to Ranchi, Kerala, Kodaikanal and even driving to Khandala. Finally, I found my waterfall in Kodaikanal. It was right off the highway. It became so famous after the ad that it was fondly rechristened as the Liril waterfall and its tourism increased manifold. I remember carrying a small camera with me. When I reached the fall, I shot it from some unusual angles. I went behind the fall, over it and explored it from multiple angles. The footage of this shoot

was my presentation to the Lintas team. Neena saw this and approved it.

Now, it was about finding the Liril girl. We as a team struggled hard and conducted numerous screen-tests. Amidst all this, I happened to think of Karen Lunel. I had earlier done one ad with her and thus, recommended her. The team auditioned and approved of her.' Adding to the finding of the Liril girl story, Alyque added , '*We auditioned over a hundred girls. The test was done under water and we took them to swimming pools, created our own small artificial waterfalls and asked the girls to stand under them. Most of the girls couldn't open their eyes under the falls, except for Karen Lunel. She was a swimming champion and could swim under water with her eyes open, for almost an hour. Although honestly she wasn't the most beautiful girl of the lot, but she had a charming smile and loved frisking about. Also she suited one specific requirement of mine - she had a relatively flat chest, and I in no ways wanted a busty model, as that would have raised questions of vulgarity. Thus, Karen Lunel who was just seventeen then, was an innocent nature's child just enjoying the fall. Hindustan Unilever was apprehensive about the bikini and we also feared about the Censor board. But the charm played its role and the essence of the ad was well communicated. Lucky that we were, we had no issues with the approval'.*

But finding the Liril fall and the girl was just the beginning. Then came the adventure of shooting the film. '*The shoot was scheduled somewhere in the month of December-January. What we didn't realize was, that it was winters. We reached the location to discover that the weather and waterfall were freezing cold. But Karen Lunel was a sport and we decided to shoot anyway. Before each shot, I would personally go under the waterfall to show her the position and as soon as I was out, I used to take a shot of brandy to keep myself warm. Well, we did the same for Karen.'*

'*We made Karen wear the bikini and when, for the first time she jumped into the waterfall, she screamed out loud! "Pull me out! ! Pull me out! !" We pulled her out and she was shivering. Wrappingher in a towel, she was given some brandy.*

Her temperament beingsporty, she agreed to continue shooting. So we followed a routine, wherein we sent her in the water for couple of minutes, thereafter we quickly took a shot and pulled her; wrapping her in towels and blankets, giving her brandy and waiting for her to be normal. That was on repeat mode.

All along, we chatted with her and when she smiled, we knew she was fine. It was a toiling experience, to be waiting for the sun to show up, from behind the clouds. Karen would be covered in heaps of blankets, her teeth chattering, each of us trying to get the next shot right - there were so many obstacles. The waterfalls were force-full and at times, we would tie her down with boulders to ensure she didn't get washed away. When we were shooting at Khandala falls, we came to know that it was infested with crabs and snakes. Obviously! this gave Karen the creeps. The fall out of this shoot was that I believe Karen still hates cold showers - this she had mentioned in one of her interviews.'

'People really appreciated the excitement that Karen portrayed in the film. However, in reality she was shivering and that translated into a natural enthusiasm for the film,' Kailash pointed out. Alyque narrated yet another incident that occurred while shooting, *"One end of the fall was really rough but very lively, so we decided to try that side. Karen went up there with the cameras rolling. As she stepped into the fall, her bikini top opened owing to the force being strong. She immediately turned back from the camera and everybody had a good laugh, including her. A little girl; she was a true sport. I remember, we used to shoot four to six Liril films in a year. In that year, we tried many other falls in Lonavala and Khandala, but somehow found them weak. So we decided upon the Kodaikanal falls. 'For the location, we always needed a small, cute, green and not a very deep fall. That was a real challenge.'* Kailash elucidated.

Being a jump cut film, the shots needed to be superimposed and technically, it was a huge challenge, back then. Sharing this challenge Kailash remarked, *'It was a highly manual and laborious process. We had to stick the frames on to one another carefully. Also, the cameras were bulky and not digital. It was a tough task.'* Apart from the waterfall, the girl and the freshness, one more element brought the film alive and was a quintessential

part of it; its sound track. The "La Laa Laa Laaaa" track is a tune that we still hum. **Vanraj Bhatia** had conceived the music track. He was one of the most popular music directors of that era in advertising. He was into classical music. Kailash shared an interesting story related to the track. '*The track was actually was an Indianized version of the music track of "Fa". Fa as a brand had not entered India back then. We had heard its track and had drawn inspiration. Vanraj Bhatia built on it and used Indian musical instruments like the Sitar, adapted the track to suit Liril and India as a country.*'

The ad was a legend due to its clarity and honesty. It ran beautifully and successfully for a rather long time. I'm sure you would want to know what happened to our Liril girl; Karen Lunel. We got an update regarding her from Kailash. '*It was weird that suddenly someone sparked off a rumor that Karen is dead. I was flooded with calls and kept telling people that it is a rumor; that she very much alive and healthy. I was in touch with her for a long time. She had settled in Australia, got married and had kids. In fact, I shot one more ad with her after she became a mother. She had come with her child for the shoot.*'

The magic that Liril managed to create had a lasting effect. Even today, the advertisement manages to strike a chord; even today Karen's charm casts its spell. It was a bold move, to unearth this fantasizing, charming side of women in times when they were quintessential housewives who did their duty unfailingly. I believe it was rather liberating to see a woman like that; in those times.

The concept of freshness was so strong, that even after four decades of wandering around, to find a new concept and undergoing many disasters to revive the brand, it has come back to its roots. Recently, in August 2015, Liril's new ad sported the old spirit - a girl in a green bikini frolicking in a waterfall with the signature tune communicating the "freshness feel". And the sign off statement announced - , "Freshness is back"! Such is the power of any legendary idea; they never die.

In retrospect, when I hold on to this common thread of women in advertising; I come across a rainbow, in which I

witness the many shades of a woman, each resonating and reflecting the era she belongs to. If we revisit the early 1980's and look at the role women played in advertising then, atypical montages unfold.

In them, I see the much loved advertisement of Brooke Bond Special Tea, one which featured **Anuradha Patel,** as the perfect homemaker. She who lives for her husband and performs each house-hold chore with expertise. However, the twist was, that at the end of the advertisement, her husband acknowledged her invincible presence in his life and appreciated her efforts by saying, "You are indeed a special woman". This advertisement was reflective of the changing aspect, that a husband had recognized the efforts that his wife had put in, to ensure a well oiled, smooth - running life. At the same a time, a stark contrast aired itself in the form of an ad, that of Double Diamond tea. It featured a working woman, who had her own identity sans a man in her life. Then, we had the more westernized portrayal of women, played by the model; Malvika Tiwari. She did aerobics and tandem-cycling to keep fit and took care of her body in the Taj Mahal tea commercial. Amidst these two bipolar extremes lived the many hues of womanhood. The Liril nymph was a combination of the fantasies of the Indian housewife and the sense of freshness. As the naysayers dismissed the bikini clad Liril girl bathing under a waterfall, the consumers loved this commercial, and how!

While we saw a docile wife, an outgoing working woman or a fantasy filled girl, with them came a lady, who although a housewife - was smart, sure and confident; who knew what she was doing and in her reprimanding manners, could preach the truth. She was none other than 'Lalitaji' - a lady in whom, we all could see our mother.

The Mother of all Ads

Surf Detergent, which after Nirma's arrival became a defending leader in the detergent space, turned out to be a

more expensive product. Although, being a better solution it faced competition from the cheaper options available. The challenge was to tell the Indian housewife; a stickler for economic decisions, that sometimes paying a little more helps even more. But who will they listen to? Shedding light on the backstory, Alyque said, *"Back then players like Nirma with their fringe pricing tactics were giving a thrashing to Surf. As per Surf, the total detergent market in India was a hundred thousand tons per year and they as a brand, had already achieved a mark of 70,000 tons.*

But then came players like Nirma, at one-third price and took the market to a whopping 2,50,000 tons. Hindustan Unilever was keen and confident about their product and rationale. They did not want to enter a price war. Thus, we sought to change the entire battleground from price to value. This was a big change and required a strong character to bring that change about." Who would be that character - that was the question of prime importance.

Alyque found an answer to that too! *"An Indian housewife would hear no one else but herself, her reflection"*. In his view, being a housewife was a role, which wasn't easy to play. It required being smart, economical and considerate. Being an all-rounder, every decision a housewife made was of prime importance. Thus, for Surf Detergent, a character was brought to life - 'Lalitaji'.

'Lalitaji' was the epitome of the Indian middle class; an independent, aggressive, housewife who is value conscious but is never willing to compromise on quality. She was smart. No one could take her for a ride. She always made the most economical decision. She was efficient enough to use all that she had, in the most optimum way possible. Even the vegetable vendor couldn't get away. But why is the expensive Surf a choice? A question whose answer Lalitaji backs with unbeatable logic "Sasti cheez aur acchi cheez mein farak hota hai"! Then she says "Surf ki khariddari mein hi samajhdari hai".

With this ad, for the first time, common people could relate to what a brand stood for and what a personality stood for. Lalitaji brought alive the pragmatic Indian middle-class woman, who wanted to bargain and extract the maximum value through her decisions. Each viewer could identify with her. In her, they found the reflection of their mother, wife, aunt or sister. With this ad and Lalitaji, the Indian housewife was seen in new light. She wasn't just some ordinary homemaker. She was intelligent, responsible and knew how to run a household optimally. The nuances of advertising in India changed considerably after Lalitaji.

In Alyque's view, Lalitaji was the woman next to us - she was not a model, wasn't selling lifestyle and wasn't selling anything. She was someone, who knew how to bargain and get better value. Although strict and firm, she managed to keep a certain ease. She portrayed the pride of being a housewife, who could multi task. And, the inside story is that Alyque had modelled Lalitaji on his own mother.

Sharing how he derived his inspiration Alyque narrates, *'My parents were wealthy individuals. I remember, once my mother had bought a Mercedes. One morning, I got up and saw a swanky Merc parked in our garage. At that time, the car was about ten to fifteen Lakhs. It was a clear indication that my mother was capable of high priced indulgence. But the*

same afternoon, I saw another really weird side of hers. That afternoon, a vegetable vendor, a "sabjiwaali",' as we Indians term them as, was at our doorstep and my mother was involved in a furious negotiation with her. I hear her say – "Paanch rupaya nahi milega, teen rupaya mein dena ho to do". My mother's stand was unchanging. I witnessed the negotiation for petty two rupees for some time and then, could not resist myself and so I asked, "Mother you just bought a Mercedes worth fifteen lakhs and now, you are arguing over a mere two rupees." To which she staunchly replied, "Alyque ek baat samajh le, sasti cheez aur achi cheez mein farak hota hai. You buy value not price - it isn't about the amount of money but the amount of value that I derive out of what I am buying. That is important!" In this sound advice, I found the roots of Lalitaji.'

'So we invented a character, who is an unmatched bargain hunter. She goes to the Sabjiwaali and says, "Ek kilo tamatar dena" and then does what she is best at and says, "Woh piche jo achha wala tamatar hai, woh dalo", "Thik se tolo". Apart from what Lalitaji did, how she did was also very crucial. This is where another dimension of her persona came to play. Her tone, her voice and the way she spoke , in its reprimanding, sure and unmistakably pitch. This tone of voice was that of my mothers. She had three naughty boys as her kids -My two younger brothers and myself. We used to play on the terrace and often climb walls and try to pull off crazy stunts. When we were involved in these daring acts, just one shout, "Aaaaaiiii", a very strong voice put us back straight in line. My mother's one shout was enough to diffuse all our naughty energies. So Lalitaji's tone and demeanor was based on my mother. And in that tone, Lalitaji speaks her final line of the advertisement, "Surf ki kharidari mein hi samajhdari hai" a line, an advice which has been etched in our memories forever.'

The fact still remains, that in Lalitaji we see our mother and when we see the advertisement, each of us feel like the little Ravi, who plays the role of her child. In Lalitaji, we found the sure and confident Indian woman. And as we traverse further in the timeline of the ad world, we come across a girl who danced on the cricket field as if no one was watching; a girl who just let herself go in the moment of happiness; a girl

who told us it is fine to have chocolates even if you are an adult; a girl who told us "Kuch khaas hai hum sabhi mein"; an advertisement that not just helped us discover the magic within us but also unearthed the magic of advertising itself.

A Khaas Ad

The beginning of this magic is equally magical and spontaneous. Piyush Pandey, a man who epitomises the definition of advertising was the man behind this spectacle. One fine afternoon, my friend Piyush and I talked about his treasure of work and in it, we dwelled over this special gem. I let Piyush lead and share some "Khaas" anecdotes of the Cadbury ad and he spoke through his moustache and mad laughter.

'The issue Cadbury was facing was that people kept blocking the product out of their lives as they grew up. Each adult would say, "Yeh to mein khaata tha jab bacha tha" and it is this mental block that Cadbury wanted to break. I vaguely remember I had had a fight with ***Rajeev Bakshi*** *for Cadbury Eclairs. Somebody from his team had said something and I had walked out from the meeting. The same night I was to leave for USA with my family for a vacation. Suddenly I had got a call from Rajeev saying that we have to prepare a pitch for Cadbury.*

The agency was stuck, the client was stuck! Nothing seemed to work although they did have a lovely idea in the form of a father telling his kids the story of "Bunder ne billi se khaai" and fooling around and devouring their chocolate. But the moment you show kids in the advertisement, the block reappears. We had to break this barrier. So I told Rajeev that I will come back and prevent the pitch. As soon as I kept the phone, my mind started brewing with ideas and I remember writing the entire commercial on the back of my boarding pass, during the flight.

Then I came back and transformed it into reality. People were still writing strategies while I caught hold of **Abhinay Deo** (then films head at Ogilvy & Mather) and told him about the idea, shared the visuals in my mind. **Mahesh Mathai** directed the film. Once the film was ready, we presented it to Rajeev Bakshi, who said that we don't need any back-up film, that he believed in this film and we would run it. This is how "Kuch Khaas hai happened".

The first element of magic was the girl, who without any hesitation was eating a bar of chocolate almost adult, that too during a time when eating a chocolate was a kid's business and an adult having it was frowned upon. Further, with her chocolate she breaks all rules, dodges the security guard, and dances her heart out over her special one's victory.

I probed Piyush to tell us about this part of the advertisement and he shared, "The girl was a model. Her name was **Shimona Rashi**. The male model's name was **Arvin Tucker**. Since the essence of the film was spontaneity and bringing out the child within you, it was a conscious decision not to engage a choreographer for Shimona's dance. We simply asked her to do whatever she wanted to. Thus, what she does on the field is an unplanned event, she simply freaks out on her own and we got what we were looking for, in the first take itself. Although we did take fourteen re-takes after it. However, at the end we chose the first take. The real magic was captured in the first one; the re-takes had rendered her conscious. The moral of the story is - when magic has to happen, it will happen. I did not decide to pick the first take, it just happened to be the first take."

The second element of magic was the track of the ad and to it, is attached an interesting story, which Piyush fondly narrates,'*We had recorded the track in English first. But I somehow felt, that I needed a Hindi version also. So I wrote the Hindi lyrics and then called* ***Mr. Pradeep Bhushan,*** *who had done the Hindi voice over. Bhushanji had done some music earlier in life, as a music director. I called him and said that the music has been recorded and I have hired a guy to sing it in Hindi., That I just want you to come and supervise the singing. Bhushanji being a nice man came and we had hired one youngster;* ***Shankar Mahadevan*** *to sing the song. That was the time when nobody knew him; his voice added a lot of depth to the film.'*

Shimona wore a frock at a time when India was still bound to its traditional side. She broke rules, danced in public and yet, all that she managed to evoke, was love and warmth. Cadbury as a film while was trying to get adults eat chocolates, it also opened minds to the fact that anyone, even a girl can be herself when she wants to, without hesitation. All this in an era, where a boy child was preferred over a girl child. Another epic campaign which has forever portrayed the power of being a woman, with its main proposition being fairness, is Fair & Lovely. In its journey of doing so, it has always remained fair to the fairer sex. Fair & Lovely; a cream that promises fairer skin but also extends the promise beyond and talks about success and confidence amongst women.

Fair in every way

Fairness is one of the biggest obsessions that our country suffers from. It probably is an after-taste of the British rule; maybe an offspring of the North - South divide. In our country, fair is equivalent to beautiful. Since eternity, Fair & Lovely as a product has worked on this premise. It promises to make you fair quickly and help you remove impurities, bringing back your original complexion. Fairness is attached to one of the biggest social concerns in our country, that of getting a girl married. In early times, Fair & Lovely based its stories

on this concern, but soon, with changing times and societal pressures the brand sought to find itself a new image and that is when the campaign centered on 'Talent' was conceived. I was fortunate to be a part of this campaign.

The first film, which brought alive this idea, featured **Genelia D'Souza** as a women commentator. In the film, she possessed the skill of being a brilliant commentator but lacked a bit of confidence. In this space her sister steps in with the product and motivates her to follow her calling. The product enhances her confidence and the little makeover that she undergoes, helps her achieve her dream. The film soon reflected reality and we saw women cricket commentators coming in; the first being **Mandira Bedi.** Now of course, we see many. The point this film made was very emphatic - the secret to find a perfect partner is not your complexion but indeed your talent. Only if girls were to realize their talent they may find success.

After this, a very interesting film of Fair & Lovely boldly challenged the gender bias. In the film, a father who cannot afford to have a second cup of coffee due to his limited resources laments to his wife about not having a boy and says, "Kaash humein ek ladka hota". His daughter overhears the conversation and the reality pricks her. She decides "Ab mein beta banugi". At this crucial moment, the product steps in and gives way to her confidence. She decides to put her education to use and gets a job as an airhostess. Once she gets the job, she takes her parents to a fivestar restaurant and buys them the best cup of coffee.

As the idea of gender equality became prevalent, we witnessed many advertisements, which portrayed women and their dynamism in many ways. 2008 saw HDFC Standard Life's "sar utha ke jiyo" campaign take a bold step. There a young daughter named Tulika Sharma writes a cheque for her dad's new car with her own savings as she says, "*Tulika Sharma chahati hai ke uske dad style se travel karein*" and her dad accepts after an initial hesitation with a look of pride on his face. Here, the film is about the girl's self-respect and her desire to provide her parents with a better lifestyle.

Her head held high

Nitesh Tiwari and I are proud of being a part of this campaign because it lets us paint the pride of a woman in a wonderful story. A daughter gifting her father a car! The emotion itself gave HDFC Standard Life's tag line – "Sar utha ke jiyo" a new depth. Nitesh and I converse about how this little story unfolded.

Nitesh, HDFC Standard Life's ad, which ends with a beautiful line, 'Car badi ho gayi aur beti bhi', How did this shape up?

'HDFC Standard Life campaign was one of the most satisfying works that I have done. To be honest, when it comes to writing quirky, fun filled stuff vis-à-vis emotional scripts. I am more comfortable with the former and hence, this ad just lucidly happened for me. This ad trained me to get into a new discipline with respect to writing. One thing that I must unfailingly mention here is that initially when I wrote this script, I had written it for a boy and his father. But when I read the same to you Pops, You made me change the protagonist from a boy to girl. You always do that! I remember you saying, "It should be a girl executive in that ad and rightly so, the emotion that a father and a daughter share is so unique! You can never bring that out between a father-son relationship!'

Yes! I often made you change the protagonist of an ad from a boy to girl, and I am so proud of you! You adopted that little perspective and it transformed into ads like KBC girl child and Kohima!

Any interesting anecdotes related to the HDFC Standard Life ad?

'One incident that I avidly remember is not something that happened during the shoot … but something that happened after it was aired! I wasn't present during the shoot and by the time I was back, the ad was made, approved and aired! A day had already passed and the ad was on air. When I saw it, I found some issues which I felt hindered the emotion of the ad. For instance, I did not like the father's voice. In my imagination, I wanted him to have a deeper voice and secondly, at a very critical point of the ad, I felt a deliberate pause was necessary, i. e. when the wife comes out and asks, "Kya hua?", the father should have paused, looked at the car, then looked at the girl and then said -, "Car badi ho gayi, aur ab beti bhi". I was so disappointed, thinking that such a good script could have been brilliant with these little changes. It was haunting me. So, we called up the client, ***Sanjay Tripathi*** *and pleaded with him saying that we can make it better.* He agreed and asked us to give the revised copy. **Andy Iyer** who was the director, is a close friend of mine. I bullied him into redoing

the father's voice and adding the pause. We sent the reworked version and the client liked it even better and started airing the edited, revised version.'

Nitesh let me share something with respect to this ad. This little incident will tell you the impact that the ad had managed to create amongst its audience. I have a cousin who works as a company secretary for a huge Indian industrial group. My cousin is an extremely well to do man and loves to play golf. Golf is his poison. One day, my cousin and his wife had come over and we got talking about our respective daughters. He shared that his daughter lives in USA and has two kids. Then he shared, "This time when she came to India she gifted me a Callaway Golf Set, which was personally signed by **Tiger Woods**. It cost her a fortune. So, I told her that I already have fifteen sets lying at home, each of them is from the same company but sans the signature so what was the need to spend so much?" To which she replied, "It isn't about you, I know you can afford a hundred more ... this is more about me. I wanted to buy you this. I have been working for the last seven years and I have bought nothing for you." The daughter had also said that she had seen the HDFC Standard Life ad on one of the Indian channels in US and had suddenly realized that she hadn't bought any gift for her dad and thus, she purchased that golf set. My cousin then started complimenting me even without knowing that the ad was one of our works. He said, "Your advertising world has made this joy possible". I felt really proud. I must thank my clients and friends; both **Suresh Mahalingam** who started the "Sar utha ke jiyo" campaign and **Sanjay Tripathi** who continued.

Do you have any such compliment that you hold close to your heart with respect to this ad?

'A very special one infact. When I chose to join advertising, despite doing IIT, it made my father very angry and he remained angry for a very long time. Gradually, he came to make peace with it but he never really praised or appreciated me openly for anything. The first time he praised me for my detour from

IIT, was when we won three national awards for Chillar Party. He said, "Okay! Now I am very proud of you". But this really valuable praise happened again although unknowingly, when this ad was released! I never discuss my work with my father, so he isn't really aware of the ads I have made. Once he was talking to my brother over the phone and by that time, even my brother had joined advertising. He told my brother, "I recently saw this ad in which a girl gifts a car to her father and he says, 'Aaj car badi ho gayi aur ab beti bhi'. It is a lovely ad, I was very touched, kitna accha hai yeh ad; kitna accha sochte hai writers." To which my brother replied, "You know who has written that ad? Nitesh has written it!" My brother then shared the incident with me and said, "Finally Papa has loved your work and he finally approves your choice!"'

As our society evolved, so did the ideas of advertisement and the role women play in it. Today, we are touching and dealing with more mature topics like remarriage of a widow and a woman being the boss of her husband. In the recent past, we have seen two brilliant films that of Tanishq and Airtel. The former is the brainchild of **Gauri Shinde** and the latter, the idea of **Agnello Dias**. I talk to both and unearth interesting insights and experiences of both these pieces of art.

A piece of Jewel

The recent Tanishq (TATA's jewelry brand) commercial sends out a bold message, where-in a dusky lady with a child is getting re-married as per Indian traditions. The ad released first on the digital platform. It was so loved that it garnered almost half a million hits on YouTube in the first week and most comments read "beautiful..." or "It made me cry...". To unearth the work and excitement that went behind this beauty, I engaged in an insightful conversation with **Arun Iyer;** Creative Director of the ad and Gauri Shinde, who directed the ad.

At first Arun shares the vision and the insight. I kicked start the conversation about the Tanishq remarriage ad being one of the best ads, when it comes to the portrayal of women.

How did you all think about this ad and how did the execution happen, tell us about it.

'Tanishq is a big jeweler and the issue it faced, is that when it comes to wedding jewelry, people prefer to go to local jewelers. The common norm is that the elders of the house make the decision when it pertains to jewelry. Tanishq was finding it difficult to break through the mind-set of the elders, more so because even on the design front, jewels from Tanishq are different. The brand does not have atypical designs which usually appeals to the elders. The designs at Tanishq are contemporary and so we decided to appeal to the changing mind-set of the society.

We also realized that women are taking a lot of decisions related to their marriage. The kind of decor they want and the occasions ; they have begun customizing the marriage preparations. Now, we often hear women saying, "It's my big day and I will make it the way I want it." We decided to reach out to this chunk of audience. The idea was thought of, since a long time but somehow was being pushed under the carpet. But now, we found resonance as we found an audience that would listen and would see how progressive the brand is. They would see merit

in associating with it. I remember ***R. Balki*** *had thought about a similar idea long back. At this time, we too, thought of something similar and it clicked; we simply made it more contemporary.*

Also, this idea was drawn from an experience of my own life. I lost a cousin, a couple of years ago. His wife was very young and as a family, we were struggling to get her re-married. My cousin's family had no issues but there was tremendous resistance from her family. They were worried about what the society would think and what would people say; that she would bring in bad luck to any family that she went into. So, the taboos associated with widow re-marriage irritated and angered me. I told myself, here is an opportunity to fight such baseless beliefs. You know after this ad, we got a letter from people saying that the way I was being treated by the society after being married for the second time has changed! Thanks to this ad.'

Yes, It changed perceptions and people started talking about it more openly. This indicated that times are changing. Yet another remarkable thing about the ad is that its protagonist has a dusky complexion! It addresses yet another taboo in our country. How did this happen? Was it planned?

'Pops! To be very honest no such thought went behind selecting a dusky protagonist. It was purely coincidental that the actress we liked, turned out to be dusky. Gauri and I were going through the screen tests for this role that is when Gauri said she has an actor, who would fit the role perfectly. We saw her screen test, found her good and thus, finalized her. While casting the protagonist we were looking for a level of maturity and grace in the way a lady would carry herself and she had that quality. We also had one more thing in mind, that we didn't want to portray a typical big fat Indian wedding that is usually shown in ads. We wanted an intimate cozy wedding, with less people and with only the ones who understand and appreciate such an act. Such were the subtleties of the ad.'

Any other interesting anecdotes attached to this splendid ad?

'There is one more interesting thing that happened in this ad and it is with respect to the music. The track we used, was one of Rahman's, from the movie "Rockstar". What happened is that

after we finished the shoot, the editor cut the ad to Rahman's Rockstar track and we found it to be perfect for the ad. After this we met for three nights at the studio and sat for long hours. Every night we listened to a new track for the ad and each time we felt what we heard wasn't matching up to Rahman's track.

By the fourth night we decided to go with this track. Even Balki was there and he said, "Let's cut the chase and buy the track and move on with life". And so we took Rahman's track! All my life I have been waiting for the day, when I am working on an ad that involves an ***A. R. Rahman*** *track and it happened accidentally ... just like that! Also the response we got was phenomenal. We knew that we will make news in India but the kind of international press coverage we got for this ad was unbelievable! With the likes of New York Times, Huffington Post and Guardian talkingabout the ad.'*

To get an extra dose anecdote I spoke to Gauri Shinde who directed this ad and she shared some really interesting bits.

What was your reaction when you heard this idea?

'My first reaction, after I went through the idea and the basic story was "Wow!" I told Arun that I want to do this. The issue of re-marriage was never spoken in advertising. When I did it, I had no clue it would become so big! It is only when reactions started coming in that I realized the impact the ad had generated.'

Share your thoughts on the casting?

"Arun must have told you that featuring a dusky protagonist wasn't on purpose. That it just happened. The protagonist is an actor; her name is ***Priyanka Bose.*** *She is a theatre artist and has also played the part of Nirbhaya in the play, based on the Delhi rape case. She also has a daughter in real life, which I wasn't aware of, before the shoot. The reason I chose her is because I found her very convincing for the role, she had this calm confidence about her and she had performed very well in the auditions too."*

I told her, "Gauri I must admit that I truly love your work. The way you portray people and handle sensitive issues, with

ease, and tell such complex stories in a simple and effective way ... is commendable." Even in this ad, the story is quite complex but it all is deciphered and melts into a realization, in one simple moment at the end. What were the conscious efforts made to make the story so telegraphic?

'Pops, we actually debated a lot over the ending of the ad, as to whether we should have that scene or not, where the daughter asks the husband, "Aaj se papa bulaun?" Some felt that the film would be even subtler without that scene. Some felt the scene defines the ad. We bounced it off to some random people and some came back with a point that without the scene, there is a sort of confusion. One could also perceive them to be a married couple, marrying again to celebrate their anniversary or renewing their vows. And thus, we went for the end where the daughter asks, "Aaj se papa bulaun?"'

Any on-the-shoot anecdotes? How was the little girl on sets?

'During the shoot, I remember the client telling, make sure that the lady has a ghunghat on her head. I had already shot the scenes and I denied saying, I'll not change and doing so is beating the purpose of the film. Finally, when they saw the film, they loved it. The small girl came across as very matured. When we told her the story, she was pretty cool about it.'

A tough call

As I talk of women and advertising, this film makes me want to say that yes we are progressing. Although, it did give way to some controversies, but nonetheless I discount it as the uproar of the ignorant and arrogant. The film opens with a female boss informing her colleagues about a deadline and how the work needed to be completed, irrespective of how much time it takes and urges them to start right away. The scene transcends to night when the boss leaves and her colleagues are working.

On her way back home she calls her husband Rohit and asks what would he like for dinner. At the same time, the film shows a man working late in the office and gets a call from his wife and he says "Aaj time lagega, boss ne bahut kaam diya hai". The boss in the meanwhile, has reached home and cooks an elaborate meal. We cut back to the man who gets yet another call from his wife. This time, it is a video call. She showcases for him, the dinner laden table. The man, who was shown as visibly upset until then, breaks into a smile. It is then revealed that his wife is his boss. She asks him to return home soon. A voice-over surmises, "*Kabhi bas ek smartphone life main thoda magic laa sakta hai. Tabhi to khaas smartphones ke liye bana hai*, Airtel – The Smartphone Network. (Sometimes, only a smartphone can add a bit of magic to your life. That's why we have a network made especially for smartphones)'

For me, the magic is very much there, in the form of a couple who knows how to balance their hectic lives and yet not let love suffer. For me, the magic lives in the fact that as a boss, the female doesn't let her personal relationship cloud her role and vice-versa. It shows a progressive metro couple who know how to value the other. Agnello Dias the brain behind this bold and loving story shares his experience of weaving it.

Agnello tell me the insight the genesis behind this ad?

'The idea developed out of a brainstorm between ***Vinil Mathew*** *the film Director,* ***Pallavi Chakravarthi*** *the Creative Director and me. We had decided that we had to cast a spotlight on new-age relationships and how they flourish, adapting to the pressures of the modern world, with a little help from smart technology; in this case, the smartphone network. This was just one film in the series at the time. The young girl who goes to a 5-star hotel for the first time and shares it live with her parents back home in real time, was another such.'*

Where did you shoot, how did you go about the casting and the look, any interesting anecdotes that unfolded during the shoot?

'We shot the film in Malaysia, the shoot went smoothly. As for the casting, after auditioning some girls, we all felt that ***Madhurima*** *fitted the bill. The short hair look that she sported, was a last minute decision and it was the hair stylist* ***Shefali Shetty,*** *who took the call. To be honest, though Vinil Mathew and I both were a little unsure about it, but then eventually, it all turned out well!'*

Who wrote the ad, directed it, who was the director of photography?

'Vinil Mathew was the director. The script evolved out of discussions between Pallavi Chakravarthi, Vinil and me. ***Swadha Kulkarni*** *was the Producer.'*

Often a bold attempt sparks a debate and a critical analysis. This ad underwent a similar phase, were you prepared for the kind of reaction this ad culled?

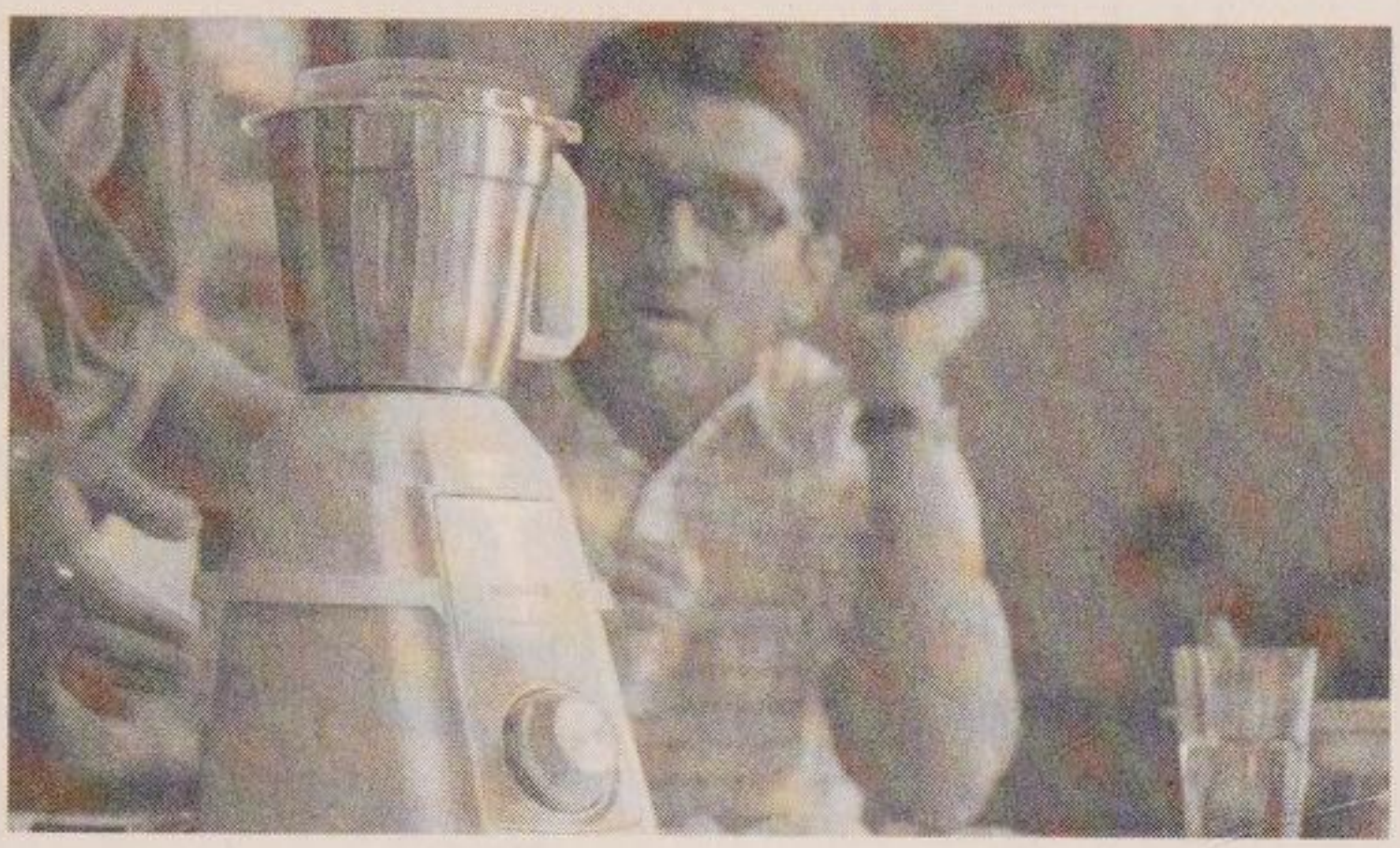
'While shooting, we had no inkling that the ad would become such a center point of debate. Our first reaction to the response was, that people really have nothing better to do. Hence, they say what they say. But then the trigger became increasingly

apparent and this is what it was boiling down to. There were many ads depicting women as normal home-keepers and that didn't seem to be a problem. There were many showing them at the workplace too, again no problem. And of course, there had been many showing them doing both, no problem with that either. But to show a woman who is her husband's boss at the workplace. . . and then showing her nifty enough to do what she likes at home; in this case, rustling up a quick bite for herself, Now that was a problem! Apparently, once she tops her husband at work, after that, she is not allowed to want to do any house-hold act ... even if she desires to do it! It touched a raw nerve in our collective social character and I am glad it did. At least, it exposed our emotional hypocrisy.'

Tanishq took a stand on widow remarriage, Airtel showed a wife as a boss. As the undercurrent of change thickens, women find their place in this patriarchal world. We have Havells joining the league, by breaking highly chauvinistic perception and saying "Women are not Kitchen appliances!" For your needs, you have fine kitchen appliances from Havells. **Shriram Iyer;** the Creative Director and Gauri Shinde the Director of the ad share the thought and execution that went behind creating, "Havells Appliances. Respect Women".

Woman, not an appliance

Havells Appliances - Respect Women, is an ad-campaign that took a really strong stand and its timing could not have been better. It was launched when the Nirbhaya case was at its peak. Havells became one of the first brands to have addressed the issue of "Respecting Women" in a rather witty manner and that caught the imagination.



So Shriram, tell us how did it all start and why "Respect Women"?

'When we began discussing this ad campaign, I remember addressing the perception of how in any house, the kitchen is considered as the woman's department. It is assumed that she is the one who will handle the kitchen, make food, coffee and so on. We were discussing on this aspect and I remember tossing the line, "Women are not appliances" and Balki caught onto it and said we should broaden it and say "Respect Women".

Our aim was to communicate that women are not appliances; there are appliances to do the many jobs we assume are theirs. And this belief isn't just prevalent in older generations. Married men of this generation too, act similarly. We are wired that way. Thus, as an idea we found it interesting to imagine women turn around and say, we are not appliances! It also connected well with Havells being a kitchen appliances brand.

The ad brought with it a larger message and a larger purpose, how did that happen?

"If left to me, I would have stopped at, "Women are not appliances". It was R. Balki who told me to make a larger statement and say, "Respect Woman". Also, the punches at the

end of the ad like - "Chutney-Patni", "Istri-Stri" was done by Balki; these puns added magic.'

Share some amusing anecdotes attached to this ad?

*'One amusing thing that happened during this campaign is that for one of the ads, "the chutney-patni" where the husband complains and says, "Maa hoti to three types ka chutney milta", to which the wife goes into the kitchen and brings a mixer grinder and replies, "25 type ka chutney banao ismein" telling that he can make whichever he wants, using the mixer and then signs off saying, "chutney-patni", implying the difference between the appliance and her. Gauri insisted, that for this ad we cast my wife **Amrita**. She has a theater background and has an acting experience. I didn't recommend her, but Gauri knew about her skills and thus, wanted Amrita to play the role. During the shoot both Gauri and Amrita enjoyed a good laugh, all through, at my expense and kept discussing how this is an every-day story at home.'*

I also spoke to Gauri who directed the ad and this is what she shared:

'I loved the coffee-maker ad as it was the most natural and realistic story of all. While directing, I had to take care that the guys side does not come across as villainous and the girl too, had to do her act of getting the coffee-maker and telling the guy to marry it! This was set-up in a very matter of fact-way and not act very smart.

Post this ad, after it was released, I received many reactions. Some women had the same stories as portrayed in the ads; some had a different one. As for the men they responded saying - what have you done? Now even if we say something in a friendly way, they say we are not appliances! Some NRI's responded, saying India is seriously changing and one of them actually considered shifting back to India looking at its progressiveness.'

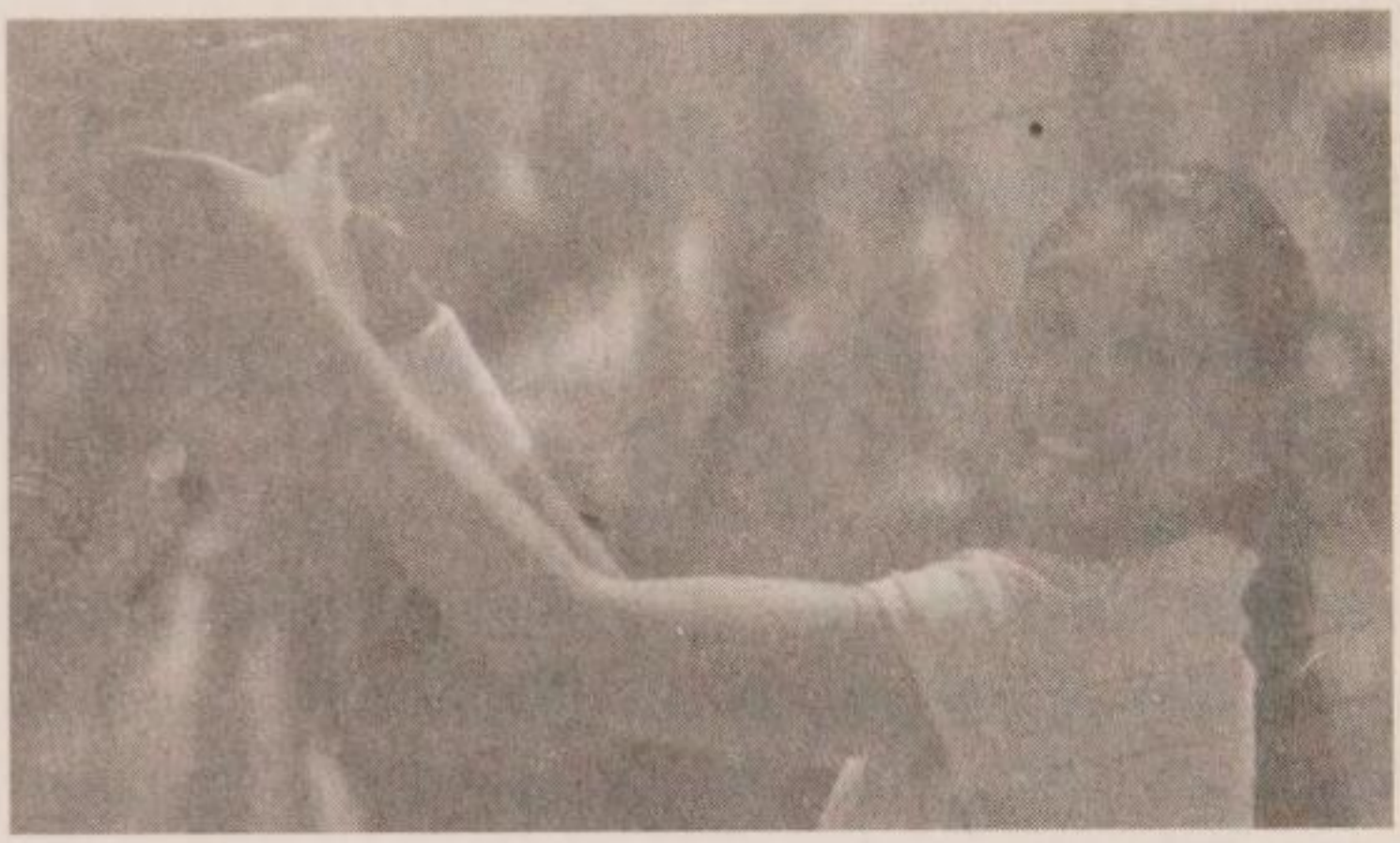
Havells did yet another campaign, where-in a shopkeeper turns on the shop lights at night, just for a woman who is waiting outside for someone. Yet again, it was a great thought. I asked Shriram to shed some light on it.

Shriram tell us about this "chota bill - bada dil" campaign and why bada dil?

'That ad was crafted for Havells LED. On the brainstorming stage, we were looking at one USP of LED, which we could focus on and highlight. The one fact we found appealing, was that it saves up to 85 per cent energy. But we did not want to simply state this fact, like a selling message. We wanted to build a story around it. We chose "generosity" to be our anchor and virtue. We decided to weave stories about people who are able to offer that light to someone, instead of using just for themselves. We built on the insight, wherein if people know that something is not costing them much money, they become generous. We had three stories to portray this and we signed off with the line, "Jab bill chota ho jata hai … to dil bada ho jata ha"'. The story of a shopkeeper keeping the light on for a woman came about, when we were discussing the ad in Gurgaon, which is not a safe place for women and that is how the idea spinned off.'

Breaking the taboo

The thought and movement for respecting women is evident in yet another ad, one that attempts to liberate women from an age-old meaningless taboo. Procter & Gamble's brand Whisper launched an ad campaign, "Touch the pickle", which fought the restrictive age-old taboo related to menstruation. An ad campaign that one would think only Indians could understand, surprisingly gained global popularity and recognition. In India, it is a taboo for women to touch pickles when they are menstruating, because of the belief that their touching it would contaminate and spoil the pickle.



During the five days of the month women are treated as untouchables; it is quite an atrocity. It is surprising to know, that even today there are homes where women sleep outside the house in the verandah or the staircase or even a small separate room from the house, while they are menstruating. Food isn't given to them, it is thrown near them. It is a grave social crime and no one has dared to speak about it all this while. Until P&G and BBDO decided to address it; they crafted an ad for Whisper. I spoke to **Josy Paul** of BBDO to get inspiring nuggets.

Please explain how the idea of 'Touch the pickle' campaign came about?

'Honestly, we did not start thinking that we will arrive at something like this. Unlike the normal strategic, linear thinking that happens at brief meetings, this idea germinated in a free conversation. We were just a group of people, sitting and chatting on how to make women unstoppable during their periods. So we discussed about the different things that stop women during their periods. And Pops! Honest to God I was unaware about so many things.

My sister and my mother never told me about these things that they have gone through, during their periods. Being men,

we were kept out of it and it all unfolded like a big secret in the house! I had never completely realized it. But when the female members of our group told us about the things that happen in their families and other rural families, we were shocked.

We backed up this conversation with a lot of research on the Internet, spoke to lot of female friends to confirm about the restrictions. Doing this we unearthed a lot of powerful points. But the issue was that these restrictions were deeply and firmly rooted in tradition and cultural taboo. And this made us hesitant on picking something so innate. Thus, we brought in experts from sociology; doctors just to explore it from every angle. And in the discussion, we realized these things exist without any particular, logical reason and the restrictions were no longer relevant or true. The entire process that led us to our anchor idea was very organic and natural. No strategies or presentations were involved. It was all born out of plain discussions. Once the idea was figured out, we thought about the apt way to initiate the conversation and we felt that social media was the perfect platform for it. It would allow women to come forward and share their experiences. The reason we chose #touchthepickle, was because all the other taboos were very intense and this was a simple act, "Hey come on! Why can't we touch the pickle?" it was an aspect that did not hurt any tradition!'

And I am sure it turned out brilliantly simply looking at the kind of response the ad received.

'Yes Pops! It worked really well. As soon as we started the campaign, thousands of women began sharing their experiences and stories. Based on the overwhelming responses, we made a short film, as an ad where we showed grand-mothers helping young girls to touch the pickle. And before we knew, there were lots of partners who wanted to contribute. This was one of the ads where the idea was so strong that it traversed beyond the brand and connected with the society, as a larger idea. And when this happens, you get a lot of help from unexpected quarters - many news channels offered to do a special program on do's and don'ts during periods! It actually snowballed into a movement of sorts!'

What was the reaction of the people involved in this ad campaign? For instance, the grandmother and the young girls in the ad? Or may be the celebrities who lent their voices?

'When we started discussing the campaign, we could feel the electric energy in the room. As we went ahead, we realized we were doing something huge and important. Everyone at every level who was involved gave in their 100 per cent, as it had a greater purpose attached to it. The grandmothers, some of them were eight years old and yet they stayed with us from 6:00 AM right up till 8:00 PM, working the day through even in the sun. I was frightened that they may face health issues, but they were super excited and carried it off brilliantly. All the celebrities who had come willingly, volunteered to lend their voice to the ad.'

Josy just like you mentioned earlier, that you were unaware of the ordeals your mother and sister had gone through while in their periods, I am sure others would have had similar stories, which they would have had shared during or after the campaign?

'Yes Pops! A lot was shared on this front; we had a lot of stories coming in. I clearly remember a friend of mine, who had written her story to me. When she started her career as a sales representative for Whisper, she went from shop-to-shop selling it, but there would be no females, who would come and speak to her about the product. Only some men would speak and ask her more about the product, because she was an attractive looking woman. And then, they would tease her by asking how the pad works and she would get so irritated. Once, she told a man that the pad is used to absorb the sweat accumulated around his collar and the man actually bought it! The campaign has led to a lot of people opening up to this reality!'

You know Josy, this reminds me of the Doordarshan times, when the sanitary napkin ads weren't allowed before 9:00 PM. They were banned, because that was the time when families used to watch television together. It was so much of a

taboo! And now, we have come a long way and this campaign opens even more doors.

'Absolutely! When this ad was released, ***Hemant,*** *who is one of the creative directors, literally had his aunts and neighbors coming to his place and saying "Arey Hemant ko kala tikka lagao! Kitna achha kaam kiya hai". Just then, one of the ladies rebutted, saying you are now talking about yet another superstition which is not required at all! And gave the touch the pickle example!'*

Did you face any negative reactions from religious organizations or NGOs?

'Surprisingly … no! We received no negative comment!'

Share the most gratifying comment that made you feel great.

'The most gratifying thing was winning the inaugural Glass Lion Grand Prix at Cannes and getting a personal letter from ***Sheryl Sandberg*** *Facebook's COO, saying that this has really opened something big for women around the world.'*

Redefining Macho

The change and its reflection aren't restricted to women alone. The role and image of men has also changed in advertising. In the early days of advertising, the definition of 'man' was 'macho'. We had the Alpha man in the Charminar advertisement, each portraying a rugged, jacketed tough guy. The Charminar model was shown as a loner, who has no girlfriend, wore leather jackets, was outdoorsy and smoked lonely. From the more aloof, tough man we moved to a macho man, who sought to impress girls with daring acts, which usually involved beating up baddies.

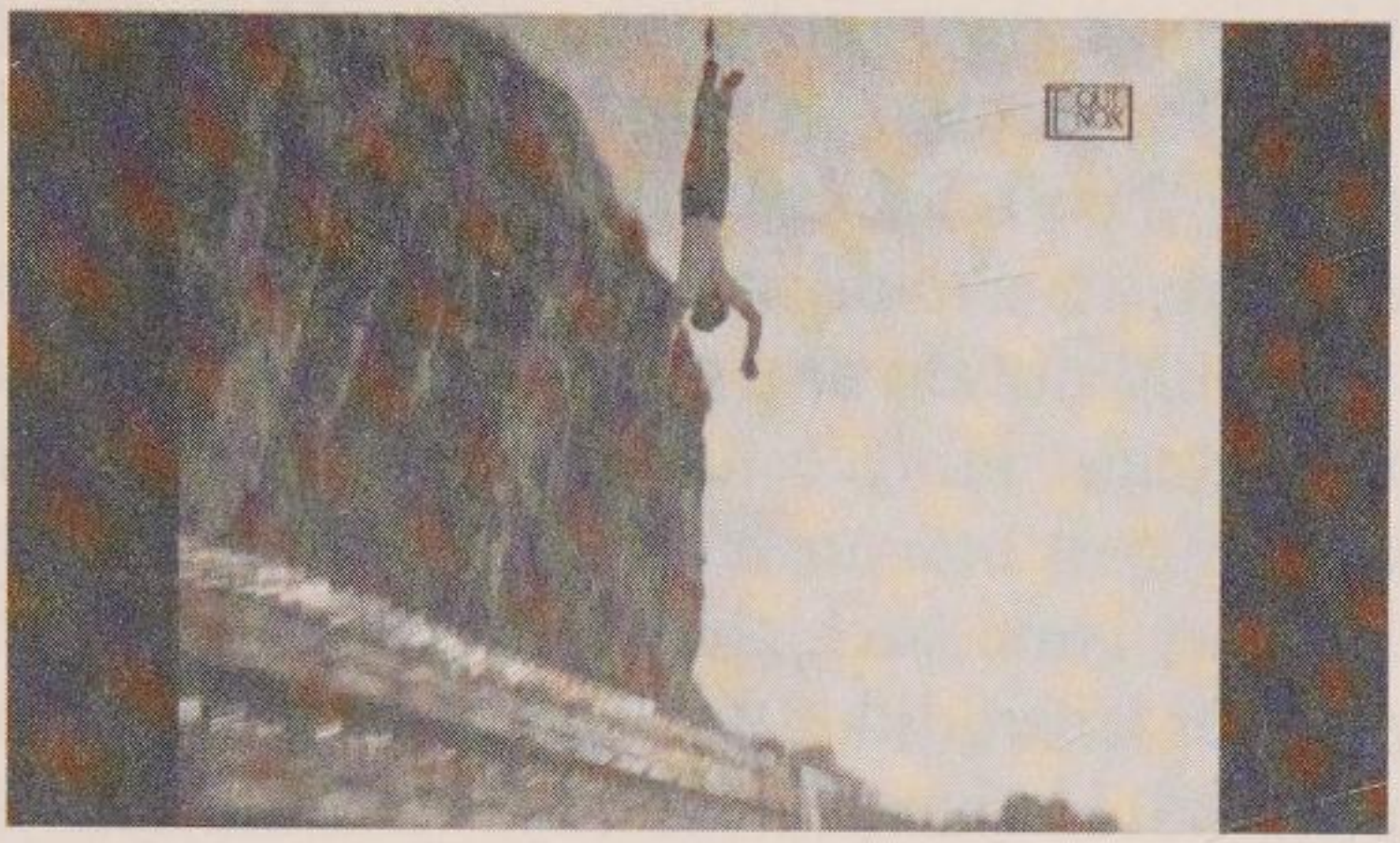
I had been involved with Thums Up for a long time and I remember the early Thums Up stories, those which featured the protagonist bashing up guys to impress his girl. And then, from the macho man we traversed to a more socially

acceptable, aware and self-assured man, whose priority isn't to impress women but to do things he is passionate about. At this juncture, one brand which shattered the myopia of being macho was Axe. It came into India with a very simple proposition, that you need not be a dude to impress a woman; you just need to smell good. Suddenly, grooming became a part of a man's daily life. This is the time when fairness creams for men had also entered the market.

While the cliché was being left behind, Thums Up as a brand underwent an overhaul and with this, came one of its most memorable films – The bungee jump advertisement. Aired in the early 1990's, Thums Up's bungee advertisement turned out to be one of the most famous films for the brand. For the first time in India, a sport like bungee jumping was introduced through this ad and it had led to a craze. Kids started trying it their own and soon, the brand had to issue a warning and disclaimer in the film. I was fortunate to be an integral part of this film and it surely was packed with thunder. Allow me to share a little fizz from back then.

Filming the Thunder

It is said, bungee jumping as a sport originated somewhere in Africa but was mastered and perfected in New Zealand and Australia. Back then Agnello Dias;the writer, **Ram Madhvani;** the Director and **KS Chakravarthy aka Chax** and I, as the Creative Directors worked together for this film. Before I share my experiences and anecdotes about this memorable film, I chatted up with both Agnello and Ram to also fill the experience with their memories and they had a lot to say. Agnello remembers everything from where the idea was first cracked to what happened next.



He says, *'I believe we cracked it at a resort in Manori, Mumbai. Of what I can remember, I know back then that being a man was all about leather jackets, gelled hair and a toughie! The image was stagnating as a cliché. A year before the bungee ad, there was this Thums Up film featuring a macho* ***Atul Kasbekar*** *dunking basket-ball and the basket catching fire. So the flavour then was about blatant in your face machoism.*

Around that time, Bollywood's biggest blockbuster film, "Dilwale Dulhaniya Le Jaayenge" was released and it broke the stereotype of the typical macho hero "Jo ladki ko bhaga ke leke jaata hai." We too wanted to do something daring but which was also cool and light in a way. That is when bungee jumping occurred to us. It's unusual to see a man jumping off a cliff with just an elastic chord tied to his ankles, so that was it. The idea clicked for us as a team and we went ahead with it. In fact back then, the sports page of Times of India had an article that mentioned how bungee Jumping had been performed for the first time in India in Khandala, during the shoot of a soft drink commercial. This campaign angle changed the brand's personality.'

For us, the most daring step was the fact that the entire film was real, including the jump. No computer effects were used. What we had used was the expertise of the world's best bungee jumping trainer – **AJ Hacket**. We travelled to New

Zealand and met AJ Hacket, who then and even now, owns and runs the world leading bungee jumping set up. They organize and train for bungee jumping even today. An interesting story is attached to this. KS Chakravarty my partner and I always believed that we should never portray or showcase anything that we could not do at a personal level. Thus when we decided to showcase bungee jumping through the film. We also decided to try it out ourselves. But unfortunately, I suffered from a heart issue back then and wasn't allowed to do it. But my partner Chax did it with AJ Hackett, before we began the commercial. He jumped at the New Zealand set up.

The ad was shot at a cliff between Lonavala and Khandala. Our actual desire was to shoot in New Zealand, but we faced two issues. Firstly, the topography and locations would not match India and thus, it would not seem like an ad made for Indians. Secondly, back then in 1993-1994 there were a lot of restrictions on foreign exchange and thus, to make it happen we would have to resort to a hawala operation which seriously was a no-no. Or we would have to shoot with an International production company, which was a time consuming proposition. The easiest way was to bring AJ Hacket to India, which we did.

Our team found Ram Madhvani as the apt director for the film, though he was known for shooting soft ads that had a human connect undercurrent. We wanted him because he has the tendency to give more than his 100 per cent, when he isn't sure. Being an entirely different genre, I knew he would be uncertain and thus, unleash his best. Agnello was the writer who actually conceived the entire idea. We researched the sport and also came across videos from Africa, where people would simply tie ropes and jump towards a flat surface or towards water and often many broke their heads and died. But we had AJ Hacket, who treated the entire sport like a science. He would calculate your body mass, height, wind velocity and the strength of the harness. It was due to his expertise that the sport became a 100 per cent safe adventure.

Apart from the bungee jumping act, what worked for me in the film was its protagonist, **Nakul Kapur**. We never wanted

a heavy-built guy, we wanted a normal boy with a swimmer's body. More like a boy next door with no six packs. His casual demeanour, casual attire; white tee and branded blue denims cut through the stereotypes and gave way to a more socially acceptable and cool guy. Once we had decided to cast Nakul, we called upon AJ Hackett and his team.

At this time yet another twist unraveled, AJ Hackett enquired about the insurance related to this sport in India. We had only one answer to his query, that there is no insurance in India that can cover for this sport. AJ Hackett refused to work any further without insurance. Thus, we engaged an international firm from overseas and availed of the insurance for Nakul and others. Further, we went through the tedious procedures of availing permissions. With everything in place, it was time to set up and shoot, a phase that was sheer madness.

Ram Madhvani narrates with a certain surprise in his tone because as he relives the time, he is unable to believe that we, as a team, and he as a director had managed to pull off this feat. *'Thums Up Bungee Jumping is an experience for which I thank You, KS Chakravarthy and Agnello. I still don't know why you guys chose me; it was an act of pure faith. Back then, it was a one of its kind sport and had never happened in India. The idea of jumping off a cliff was insane! The risks attached to it transcended beyond the definition of insanity. In India, we don't have cliffs which have a deep end, they are all straight steep cliffs and thus, to jump would mean to bang yourself into the cliff.*

To solve this problem, we were to set-up a crane, which would hold a cage. The cage had to be engineered to be tough enough to hold the weight of four people. Setting the crane and cage was a huge challenge. Then came the even tougher part, which I believe taught us physics and mathematics like no school could have had. The entire stunt was supposed to be real, from the jump to Nakul's grabbing the bottle of Thums Up from the truck. To achieve this reality, we were required to calculate the speed of the truck, the timing of the jump and camera angles - so as to ensure it all works in tandem and the stunt actually happens. A slightest miscalculation would have led to an accident.

AJ Hackett and his team took over the scene and calculated the entire situation to the 'T'. In those days, I was highly influenced by ***John Woo,*** *who used to shoot using seven to nine cameras at a time. I decided to use three, of which one camera was tied to the bungee rope. Some cameras were placed on the cliff's steep ends. All this I did even, though I had the fear of heights. I have managed to tackle each of my fears through directing films. I remember, most people used to walk at the edge of the cliff and down, while I used to crawl to place cameras.*

I ensured that the angles I took, in no way make the film look unreal. My business partners back then were sure that this was the most dangerous thing I would be doing. They weren't even sure if I would make it back safely. It was an eleven to twelve day shoot. Nakul used to jump three times in a day so that we could get the right shot. More than three times wasn't permitted by Hackett's team. They were thorough professionals and knew their job extremely well.

What was even more interesting about them was their love for environment. Hackett's teams used to rappel down the cliff to check if there were stones, or remove obstacles and to do while recce (scouting for location). Each time they went down without being told, they would bring back thermocol and plastic waste which was left behind by tourists on the cliff. Each time they went down, they would clean up the hillside. In all it was an act of madness'.

Agnello adding to the anecdotes says, '*In the film, there is a shot where the guy is falling and we take a wide from afar, to show the reference scale of the fall from the ground. Thus, to depict a macho image, Ram had shot with an eagle in background. But it wasn't feeling apt, as the eagle brought back the tough guy image which we wanted to break. So we decided to use a monkey. We shot with both the eagle and the monkey and at the edit, we viewed both and a unanimous decision was taken, to go ahead with the monkey; it felt more quirky, cool and less masculine.'*

It was madness! , We had to bring up to the hillside, a sixty-foot industrial crane. The jump was about 1,500 feet

and we had to keep it real. One of the nicest things about AJ Hackett was that he used to distribute a tee each his crew-members, to our production and creative team and to each and every participant. It read "If you're not living on the edge, you're wasting space"; propagating the philosophy of adventure sport.

The ad became so popular that it led to a controversy, as kids started trying the stunt by tying themselves with dupatta and sarees. Thums Up had to issue a disclaimer in its ad. It is indeed noteworthy, thatit was with this ad, that the concept of a disclaimer came into place. Ever since, Thums Up ads have been the reason that India has been exposed to new adventure sports. The trend of adventure for oneself became the definition of thunder.

The Thums Up series made the boy next door interesting. Similarly, there have been films which have portrayed men for what they are. For instance "Bande Achhe Hai" of ICICI Prudential. It happened during a time, when the country was rocked by the Nirbhaya case and the media had gone berserk with our country being portrayed as a male-dominated society; where men were nothing but devious demons. This had led to a very clouded and negative perception of men. Thus, as a breath of fresh air and attempting to show the positive side of men, ICICI Prudential aired the "Bande acche hain" ad.

The Gillette Soldier

A man, a brother, a father, a husband, a friend protecting the women in their lives and women in general, became the band of Gillette soldiers. A campaign that came at the time when the Nirbhaya case was prevalent across media and it led to the perception, that men are bad and women need protection. There are two aspects to this truth. One is the fact that what happened was extremely dark, cruel and unforgivable. It was a black mark in the history of our country - a country where we pray to Goddesses. The other aspect was that the incident had led to immense negativity towards the men of this country.

In such a situation, Gillette pulled out a silver lining and crafted an ad where women came forward and said that not all men are bad and we know a lot of men who respect women. The Gillette ad portrayed army men and soldiers as what real men stand for and also, that the army men act instead of cribbing. I spoke to Josy Paul, its Creative Director to dole out the story behind this ad.

Josy can you share what inspired you and Gillette to take such a stand?

'Three things were responsible for this ad. One was the brand Gillette, which stands for – "The best a man can get". It is about the confidence of a man, when he goes out into the world. Second, is when this confidence gets affected by the media and third, was the time to discuss what the best can be. When the Nirbhaya case happened, my wife and I were very upset. At this point, my wife came upto me and said something that hit my core! She said, "you are in the business of communication … what are you doing about it?" I replied, "I wish I could do something about it and I wish I was working with some government body on this issue." The conversation ended there.

But one night when I was sitting late in the office, something occurred to me and I put this video together at about midnight. The next morning I took the video to the client and they liked the idea. Soon the entire concept was approved even at the International office. The ad predominantly says that it is the time to discuss what a man's values are and it had nothing to do with the sales or the product. We did not show the product or even speak about shaving.

We had started off this campaign on Internet and on social media. It led to sharing of many stories. We received about five millions stories in a period of just two and a half months. It became so popular that we had to then, make a TVC on similar lines. The message was spread by many celebrities like ***Boman Irani*** *and* ***Harsha Bhogle,*** *who gave out heartfelt messages.'*

A Collective Change

Advertisements have also undergone change with respect to the sensibilities, the economic situation of the country and the various phases that India went through. The advertisements aired during the DD days had two distinct influences, British and Indian. There were ads which suffered from a British hangover, where every element from the model, the set-up, and the lifestyle depicted, to the language everything was western. Then we had ads which were innately Indian. I was personally involved in one such memorable transition - Where the English way of having tea was replaced with the Indian way of having Chai. An ad, which compelled and still makes people say, "Wah Taj".

How Ah! Taj became Wah! Taj!

Sometimes somebody else's view of you brings in a compelling change. Back in 1987-88, Taj Mahal Tea, was a brand with which, most of us would usher in our morning. It was considered to be a niche tea; it being born in the colonial times of India. Taj thought of it aimed at the elitists; the ones who had embraced the western nuances of life and culture. Thus, it had ads which had a hot model **Malvika Tiwari** performing aerobics and tandem cycling, which was a reflection of a western lifestyle. However, the truth was far away from perception. Small packs of Taj Mahal Tea were consumed across India, especially by the middle-class "Indian" Indians. This was a wake-up call for Taj Mahal Tea, to include its larger drinkers and talk to them. Only when they stepped out of their perception of being western, did they realize they were equally Indian.

With this realization came the task to re-position the brand and this led to the creation of one of the most loved ads of Taj Mahal Tea; where the tabla-maestro of India **Zakir Hussain** says, "Arey huzoor, Wah Taj boliye" returning a heartfelt complement "Wah Ustad!".

I was fortunate to be a part of the "Wah Taj" campaign. My copy partner, KS Chakravarthy aka Chax, wrote the ad; **Dhiren Chaddha** was the account planner, who insisted that we needed to usher in the refinement to Indian-ness. In Dhiren's view, we weren't talking to the Indian middle class, who were our predominant consumers. Our ads were not attuned to their likes and sensibilities. I vividly remember, how he used to approach me every day; sit next to me and say, "It should be like a chiffon sari" - his idea of refinement always amused me. This refinement we found in Zakir Hussain.

This is the story of how Ah! Taj became, Wah! Taj.

In the earlier version of the ad, Malvika after sipping her Taj Mahal Tea exclaimed – "Ah! Taj". She was suave, elite and western. She loved the tea but so did the Indian house-wife and the classic Indian male. I clearly remember the ten paisa, twenty-five paisa packs were selling like hot-cakes, as everyone loved the strong flavor and taste of the tea. So now, as admen, we were given the task to connect to the larger Indian audience - the middle class; all this, back in the 1980's. Yet, we weren't to lose the hint of being elite and quality-driven. So we were required to walk the tight-rope.

Our team got thinking on how to talk about strong flavor, consistency and quality in a way, that the 'Indian' Indians could

relate to. As a team we browsed through the process of making tea and we noticed that the tea leaf - the raw material is sourced from multiple places. Thereafter, the tea is made, which is tasted by a tea-taster; an individual who is crucial to the entire process.

Only after the taster approves of it, does the tea reach you. This taster knows what tea drinkers like. Thus, we wanted to tell the viewers how hard and meticulously the tea and its taster works, so that one can wake up to a refreshing cup of tea everyday! After all, who wants to kick start their day with a bad tasting cup of tea! We knew that for every tea lover, three things were of prime importance - Rang (color), Mehek (aroma) and Swaad (taste). We wanted to say that Taj Mahal Tea lived up to expectations on all these three fronts and with greater consistency.

But we wanted to share this in a way that would interest viewers; that they would remember and love the brand and the ad. And for this, we needed someone they love, someone who signifies quality, persistence and consistency. That was when the curly haired child prodigy; maestro Zakir Hussain occurred to us.

His talent, persona and taal have stolen hearts! He is India's most loved artist. Zakir doesn't end there. He is an Indian, who has a global face and is recognized the world over. We found him as the most befitting brand presence, as he was a blend of both; innate Indian-ness and the global feel. He appealed to the Indian middle-class, who loved his tir-kit-a-dha and western art-lovers as well. Above all, he defined practice, perseverance and quality. He was known for his dedication towards his art and his hours of riaaz. This fit well with our tea-tasters diligence to bring the right tea for tea lovers. Thus, we approached Zakir Hussain.

Perfection was his very nature, he was obsessed with it. Back then and even now, he was known for his jugal-bandi. He could jam with any instrument, any artiste and create magic. These traits were what we picked up for the ad, in which we had a small kid playing with him, depicting a jugalbandi. This was interspersed with tea tasters of Taj Mahal Tea, hand-picking the best tea for its drinkers. While I doled out the

insights and thought behind the "Wah Taj" ad, Chax filled in all the action as we walked down nostalgia lane, discussing one of our most prestigious pieces of works.

The reason Zakir Hussain was woven in, apart from his versatile appeal, was owing to Chax's love and passion for the instrument - "Tabla". And with this little nudge, I have Chax pouring out anecdote after anecdote!

Chax, share your side of the story - Why Zakir?

"I remember Pops, we decided to bring in Zakir Hussain because I like Tabla. My initial thought was that the Tabla will say, 'dhm dhmm' which will be interspersed with 'Wah Taj' (he put an animated act) I thought of this, while I was attending a seminar. Back then, we didn't know or even people in general, in India, did not know how Zakir Hussain looked! Nevertheless, he was a famous man! This was in the 1980's, when television wasn't still a popular culture and people had heard his name, predominantly on Radio. Remember Pops! You had done the print ad for Taj, wherein we had printed Zakir's name in big bold letters? Once we decided to cast Zakir Hussain, one of our colleagues told me, "Chax, I hope you know Zakir Hussain lives in San Francisco!" And I was like, "Yaar! Ab kya hoga!" But after much deliberation, we decided to call him and surprisingly he agreed to fly down for the ad and charged us a mere INR 50,000.'

Yes! I know we were thrilled to have him! Tell me what unfolded at the shoot ?

"Pops! I met him at the Mumbai International Airport and then we drove down to the domestic airport and caught a flight to Delhi. From Delhi, we drove to Agra. On our way to Agra, in the car, I briefed him about the ad and told him that it would be a thirty seconder; that he would have to play exactly for that while. On our way, he made some mental notes and said "ho gaya" (it's done)! He had composed what to play in that short a time-span. We were to stay at the Taj Hotel in Agra and reached there at about 4:00 AM. On reaching, he directly headed for the conference room where he got straight to work and started playing.

But the story doesn't end here! We then joined him in the conference room, along with the ad film Director ***Shumantro Ghoshal.*** *Zakir played what he had composed for us and at the end we said, "Zakir, sorry the piece was 31 seconds! We need that extra one second for the end pause … and thus, we need an exact thirty seconds piece." To which he replied, "Okay! No problems!" and then, immediately played for thirty seconds and repeated the piece multiple times without any qualms. It was brilliant!'*

What happened next?

'Now we had just two hours to sleep and rest, then we had to leave for the shoot. This was the first time that anyone had shot Taj Mahal from behind the river Yamuna. We were all ready and suddenly learnt that Zakir had fallen ill, due to food poisoning. Left in a lurch about him running to the wash-room every now and then, we decided to call off the shoot. However, said Zakir, "If we have to shoot, we have to! If I feel the need … the river is always there!" and he laughed! Such is his professionalism. Despite his condition, we shot the ad!

What I also love about him is his sense of humor. We were at the location and a crowd had gathered. It was continuously asking, "Kaun aa raha hai?" (Who is coming), anticipating a celebrity. Zakir, playingout his funny side,told the crowd, 'Mithun bhai aane waale hai, mein uska chota bhai hoon" and hearing this, more people gathered waiting for Mithun to arrive.'

Yes, His sense of humor is impeccable, Chax but the irony of this ad is that the thought with which you started, wasn't achieved! Am I correct?

'Oh! Yes Pops! That is a story in itself! The genesis of the ad was that I wanted the beat, 'Dhm Dhmm' to fuse with the tagline, "Wah Taj". When I told Zakir about this as the base of my ad, he simply refused. He said, "I can't play this, it is technically incorrect. I can either do 'Tak Dhin' or 'Dhin Tak', but Dhm Dhmm' (or a similar sound beat) is incorrect." I was taken aback, because that beat was the very genesis of my vision of this ad. In an attempt to convince him, I said, "This entire campaign

is born out of my thought to do 'Dhm Dhmm' which actually sounds like 'Wah Taj'! You do all sorts of things, why can't you do this?" To which he replied, by citing two reasons. First he said, "If I do something like this on National Television, I won't ever be able to come to Bombay again - ***Allah Rakha Khan*** *(his father and guru) will kill me!" and then, came his second reason, he asked me "When is your Birthday?" I said, "16th October" To that, he played the entire Happy Birthday song on Tabla and told me how each word is associated with a different beat and thus, 'Dhm Dhmm' is incorrect for 'Wah Taj'. Finally, I had to cave in and we ended the words 'Wah Taj' as he played a flourish.'*

Did Zakir ever share anything about his experience of doing this ad?

'Yes. Apparently Pops, I met him after four years and he told me, "You know, because of you guys, now the Air Hostesses know my name when I fly to India." Pops! After this ad, for years, in many of his concerts when anyone from the audience shouted, "Wah Ustad", he used to say "Arey! Huzoor Wah Taj boliye" and that became a trademark.'

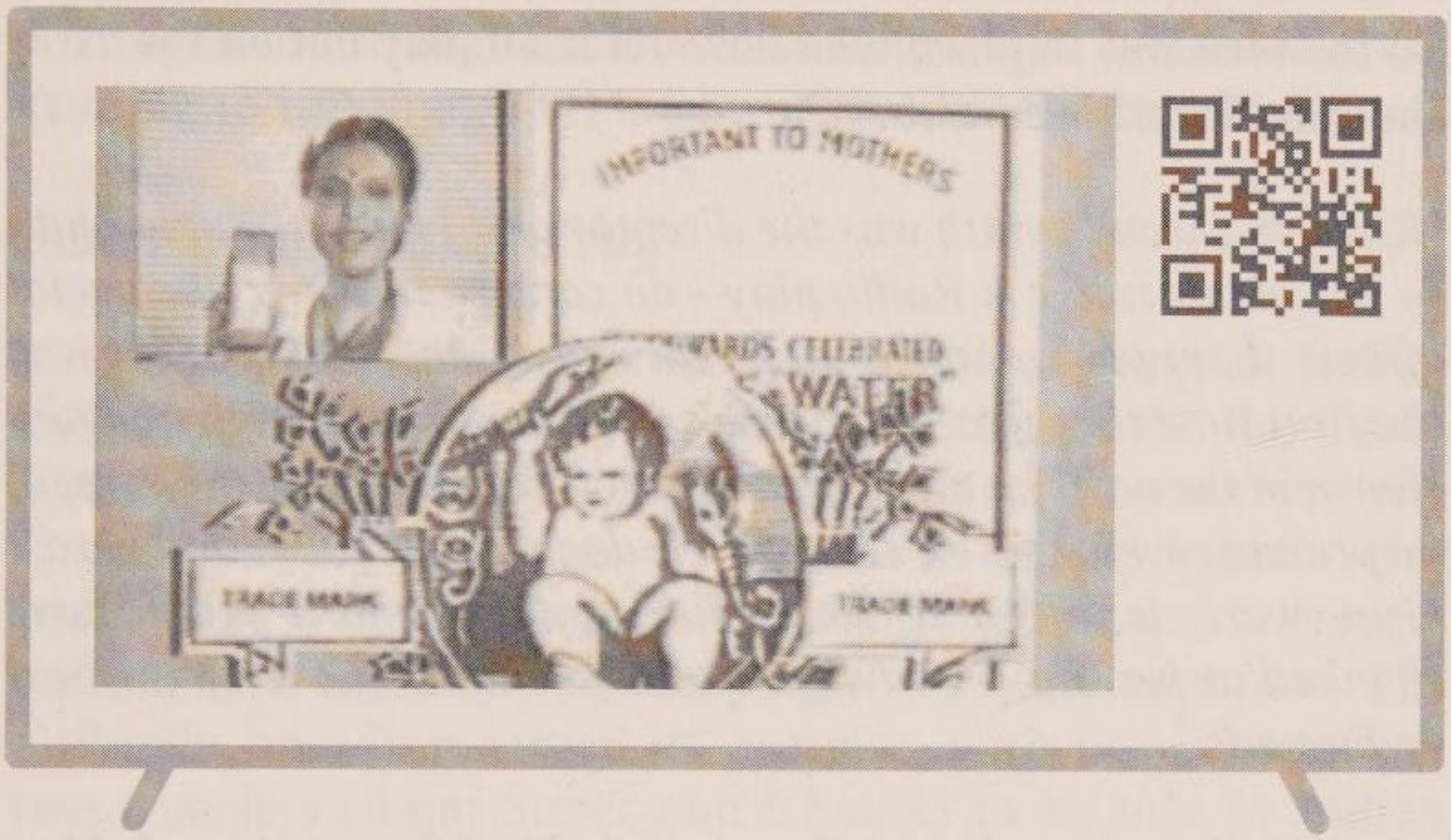
Such was the magic "Wah Taj" had created. It reflected a change, that was innately Indian and as Chax and I walked down nostalgia lane, we came across an ad that reflected the same innately Indian tradition. Woodward's Gripe Water ad, a creation from yester-years that still holds relevance, because it simply portrays the Indian way of living. Chax shares some interesting bits from this legend.

Relevant for Generations

Chax tell us how did the five generations campaign for Woodward's start?

'Pops! It all began with a grave problem, which like a routine, Dharen Chadha shared with us. He told us and I am sure you remember this, that he had conducted a research across 2500 Doctors, where-in all of them echoed that Woodward's Gripe water is not good. That, it should be stopped and the stock available, should be thrown away. All this was happening

because back then, an international brand called "Bonnisan", an allopathic medicine for infants had entered the Indian market. All the Doctors were recommending that and not Woodward's.



So the "Doctor recommends it" way of advertising was completely closed for us. The only approach left was to appeal on the basis of "Tradition". Interestingly, the Woodward's project coincided with our lives at an apt time. Back then, Pops you had just got married. Our office manager's wife was expecting, our friend ***Narayan Kumar*** *was in the same phase and I had just had a daughter! So, the script just happened almost suddenly, because it was right there in front of us. For instance, I had five generations in my own family - my wife, her mother, her grandmother and her great grandmother.'*

So did a similar situation unfold at your place when your daughter was born?

'Absolutely Pops! It actually happened when my daughter was born and was crying. The elders recommended Woodward's Gripe water, to which I had protested, citing that the Doctor had forbidden its usage. My protest was combated with pointed questions, "How old is your Doctor? Does he have children?" My mother and grandmother would tell me,"We gave you the same thing, are you not healthy?" The entire support system of elders

will ask you these questions and you have no answer; you cannot deny or disagree. So the insight was right in our homes - that of elders having the final say, while bringing up kids. They always believed in their own experiences over the instructions of a doctor!'

So the idea was in place then how did it all play out on the shooting front? Who shot it?

'Kailash Surendranath was the director and I had instructed him to just shoot it like a Radio play - no camera moving, no special effects. I simply wanted it to be an end-to-end dialogue. It was the first time that five scenes were shot separately, with no baby shown in the ad. The thought was purely displayed on the screen, no pretense whatsoever. Despite the doctor's denial Woodward's Gripe water is still being successfully used. So many people have thanked us for the Woodward's ad and said it is one of the best Indian ads.'

I believe there is an interesting story behind the casting of this ad too?

'Yes! Usually, you shoot the ad in one language and then dub the same ad in different languages. For the Woodward's Gripe water ad, we decided to go out of the way and decided to cast a different set of actors for each language. We shot five master productions in five different languages. Further, we insisted on roping in theatre actors instead of models and regular ad faces. It all turned out to be authentic, which made it a cult film.

Yet another interesting twist we brought in, was as a follow up to the campaign, we suggested to run the Tamil ad in Bengal, the Bengal ad in Maharashtra, and likewise, so that people learn some words of the other language. Of course, everyone knew what was being spoken. But that did not happen as the client didn't run it like that. In my view, the ad worked and became a cult because we took the pain to cast five different set of actors and shoot original ads for each region, instead of dubbing them. Also, what we said was the truth out of our lives; Woodward's Gripe water was a hundred year-old brand with five generations recommending it! It wasn't exaggeration of any kinds! The ad had become so famous

that my mother maintained a file with more than twenty-five magazine cuttings, talking about the ad in every state!'

Woodward's Gripe water reflected the India that we are, and have been since ages. As we talk of ads that reflect India and us, I reach an iconic brand - Bajaj. The Bajaj ads have portrayed both; the India we were and the India we were heading to become. That is how it became Hamara Bajaj.

Humara Kal, Humara Aaj

Yet another legend that reflects the spirit of being an Indian and also goes on, to reflect a changed India are the Bajaj ads. The campaign, "Buland Bharat ki Buland Tasveer" hit the screen in 1989, riding on the idea of a "family vehicle" for Indians. It was still the pre-liberalization era and forging a nationalistic identity in a campaign was quite common. The umbrella branding served its purpose, with just a couple of two wheelers (Bajaj Super and Chetak) to be sold to Indian consumers. But as the times changed, the second commercial using the same line hit the air. But it was in 2001, that the "Hamara Bajaj - Naya Hain Kal" commercial reflected a strategic shift. The second Humara Bajaj was a metaphor to many things, from scooters to bikes, from **Rahul Bajaj** to **Rajeev Bajaj**, from Doordarshan to Satellite TV and from the old India to a more globalized India.

It was back in the time when Hero Honda had managed to change the trend from scooters to bikes with the CD-100 campaign, "Fill it - Shut it - Forget it" had caught the imagination of the country, as it was built around the aspect of fuel efficiency. Before Hero Honda, the image of a bike equaled a ride for the macho-man and the likes of Royal Enfield, Jawa and Yezdi were associated with it. But with the advent of Hero Honda, the perception changed to "a fuel efficient bike" for a family man. This also led to the transition from scooters like Bajaj Chetak, Vespa and Lambretta to bikes , which resulted in the good-old scooter taking a back seat in sales, utility and image. This called for a need for Bajaj to re-connect with its customers.

The ambition was to do "Hamara Bajaj" again. I was fortunate that I saw it shaping up as a team member. Rajeev Bajaj's vision was associated with it. He wanted to release the second Hamara Bajaj at a time when he had fabulous bikes to offer. He wanted to use that to connect with the younger audience. The objective was to connect with the shift; from scooters to bikes. Secondly, he did not want to harp on mileage like the others because he felt, that somehow, the "fuel efficiency" aspect was robbing one of the "pride of riding a bike".

With the release of the second Hamara Bajaj, he also wanted to introduce his new portfolio of bikes which included Pulsar and Wind, and their capacity from 100 cc to 110-125 cc. In the process, they also invented a fabulous engineering marvel for India called – DTSI technology, which had two spark plugs in the engine. It thus provided both, power and fuel efficiency. Which meant one could get the best of both the worlds. The idea was of giving importance to the pleasure of riding viz-a-viz mileage.

But amidst all this they did not want to forget their roots, the task was to continue to build on the national pride of Bajaj; adding a flavor which made it relevant for youngsters. Based on this launch pad of need, R. Balki and I began discussing with the team on what could be done. In the discussion, the thought that surfaced was "however much we might have changed and bought new bikes etc. ... the core of our heart remains the same". This was true for Bajaj too. They might have come up with a new age, cutting-edge technology. They might have introduced new bikes and they also had a new leader in Rajeev Bajaj, but their heart remained the same. We anchored onto this insight and then, we began picking up real life cues that resonated with our insight. And we observed that the young might wear a Michael Jackson tee, listen to pop music and converse in English but when they visit their grandmother, they touch her feet. You may ride a suave new bike and may have studied abroad yet, when you see an idol of God you stop and pay your respect. This observation reflected both; the change and the unchangeable Indianness.

Based on this observation, we decided to make an ad - one which was a collage of change and Indianness fused together. The ad said just one thing. We are evolving but our roots are intact and this was depicted beautifully in montages, which showed young people on bikes going through instances, where their respect for their culture; for India and their values are evident. We began with scribbling down the probable scenes that would depict what we intend to communicate. The first visual that came to our mind was when we see a temple or a place of worship and even if we are on our bike riding, we take a break and pay our respects. Then Balki came up with the observation that when accidentally, our feet touches someone, we ask for forgiveness and do a small hand movement. We morphed this action and used it at a bike stand for the ad.

One more instance we included was when a Sikh boy marries a foreigner and they go to Gurudwara and she covers her head with a dupatta. This we shot in Amritsar. Yet another insight Balki came up with, was women guarding their bindis in rains, as a bindi washing off of is considered inauspicious. We shot this particular scene at Marine Drive and created artificial rain for the scene. We showed a girl riding her bike in rain, but stops the vehicle and guards her forehead to save her bindi from getting smudged. Yet another visual we included was of two bikers, changing the course of their ride to save a beautifully made Rangoli. Whenever you see a Rangoli, especially in the South, where women make rangoli everyday, one doesn't want to spoil it even if it is in your way.

These visuals came together and resulted in a vivacious collage, which was shot across the country from Punjab to Kerala to Chennai to Mumbai - to give it a pan-India feel. The track we used was a similar one to the original, we just added a twist with modern musical instruments. **Rajat Dholakia** aka Juku did the track. The ad, once released, became a rage and completely repositioned Bajaj, bringing it closer to the young generation. It was a film with which, both, Rajeev Bajaj and Balki weren't fully convinced. I had kept pushing them and it had turned out to be a huge success. The idea had germinated quite a while ago, but Rajeev kept it on hold, saying let's wait

for the right portfolio of bikes to come about from the house of Bajaj. I truly believe that his vision and timing was absolutely correct. As for Balki, despite his view, he still managed to ghost direct the film with full passion! Kudos to both of them.

Collective change is constantly becoming the fabric for ads, as India progresses and we enter an era, which is led by the gadget generation. It is a generation that believes in the "you live only once" attitude. Plenty of ads have picked cues from this change and created stories but one ad campaign that aptly depicts today's modern generation is Fastrack. I speak to Arun Iyer, the Creative Director of the campaign and excavate some really interesting tales.

Moving On

Arun, I must say Fastrack is one of the boldest ads. It is unabashedly candid and so unpretentious. Tell us about this piece of work.

'When it came to the ad campaign, we had decided one very crucial thing, which set the tone for all the ads. We decided that "we will not be speaking for them but we will speak like them". During that time, the entire issue of LGBT rights was in the news. Picking up from there, we decided that the ads we make

will be a take on the societal taboos and this resonated well with the brand philosophy which is, "Move on".

Now the challenge was how to initiate the "moving on" conversation with our audience? We addressed it, by choosing to be non-preachy, non-intrusive and matter-of-factly witty about it. Thus, the ad was a simple twenty second story which had two women coming out of a closet and the copy said, "Come out of the closet. Move on". We were very graphic because we wanted to be honest about it and say, that we are no one to judge anyone for their sexual preferences. The ad created an uproar and ample conversation about the LGBT rights issue. It reflected what most youngsters think, "let people live their lives, their way! Let's not interfere!"'

Any on the shoot stories you would like to share?

*'**Bharat Sikka** was the director who is a fashion photographer. He instilled his style in the ad. He made the girls who were acting very comfortable. We were struggling, as to which track we associate with the ad. We wanted something that is cool and at the same time, makes sense. We finally used a track by **Daft Punk** and it was the first time, anywhere in the world, that a Daft Punk track was used. They don't really give out their music for commercial purposes, they are a close-knit French band. We found them, contacted them, sent them the presentation about the brand and post all this they gave us the permission to use their track.'*

The campaign before the 'Come out of the closet' one was a take on open and no strings attached relationships, tell us about that ad campaign?

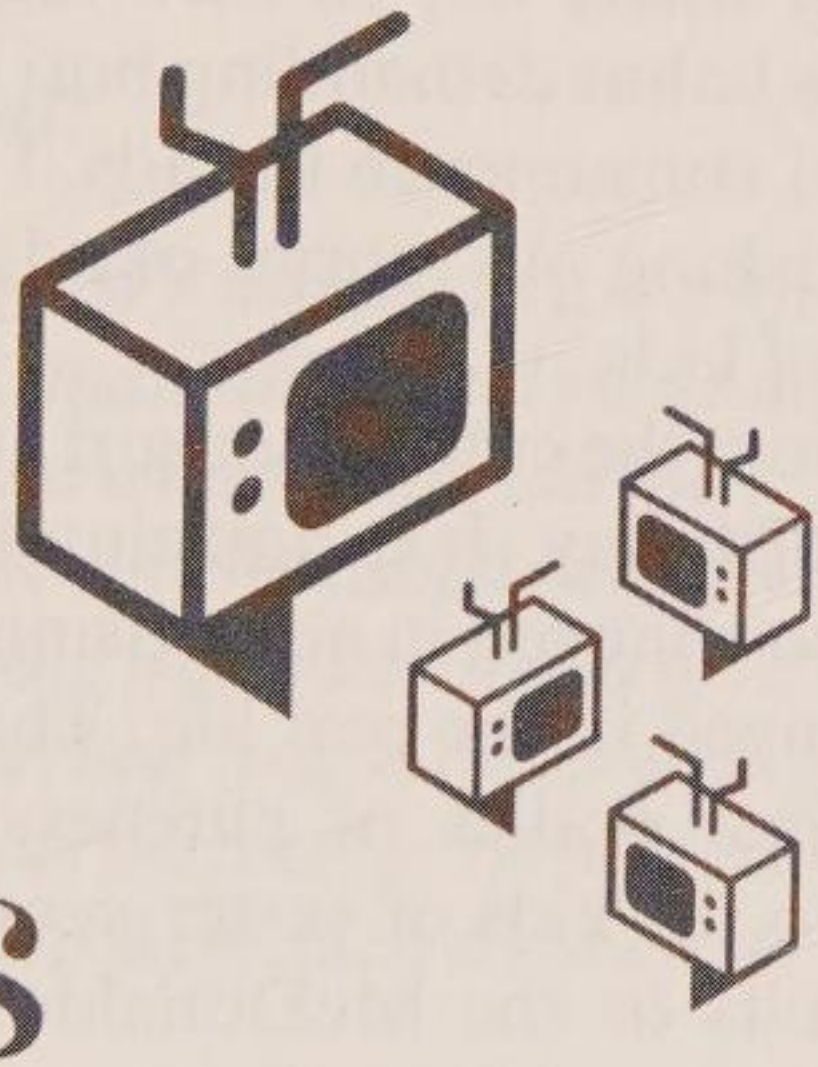
'Move on' - as a phrase is such a strong articulation that we have found it difficult to move away from it. Every time we find a new interpretation to the phrase that becomes our creative idea. The campaign related to relationships, was Fastrack's open acceptance to the fact, that today, uncommitted has become the way of life! , it isn't all heavy-duty any longer, people move on

with life. The phrase is so popular that recently the movie, Tanu weds Manu 2 has a song, "move on, move on".

We also did an ad for Fastrack bags, which featured ***Virat Kohli*** *and* ***Genelia D'Souza. This*** *was again in the uncommitted space, on how you can move from one relation to another. Virat was a bit nervous doing this ad and he did not want to come across as a frivolous guy. Also, he was on his way to assume a larger role as the vice-captain of Indian cricket team, but he was porting enough to do it!'*

What is the kind of reactions these bold ads got?

'The reactions are always polarized - some like it, some don't! We were fine with it, because we expected so. Being bold has its share of dislike, but so is true for today's youth, who doesn't live to please everyone and we speak just like them!'



The Kids Connection

The Kids Connection

We have seen women playing multiple roles, from a homemaker to a go-getter in advertising. Ads have also captured the varied shades of men, be it macho hues or the considerate "Ache bande" colour. We have seen the spirit of the youth and have enjoyed it all. But one ingredient that we have reveled indulgently in, is the "cuteness quotient and the naivety that kids have brought in". We all remember the cute little boy of Dhara Oil saying, "Jalebi" in the sweetest way possible. We all adore the Rasna girl. We all smile when the boy in the Surf Excel ad, hits a puddle to avenge his sister's fall. We all laugh at the smart boy in the McDonalds ad, when he says "Girlfriends bahut demanding hoti hai". As I trace the role of each kind of consumer in the ads, I reach the cuteness station and begin fishing out stories of ads that became famous due to the role of kids.

I start from the cute Rasna girl and move on to the smarter, wittier lot of today. It is amazing to see how the imagery of kids has also changed in advertising. Well, it's because of kids having changed in the real life. The Rasna girl or the Dhara boy were just oodles of cuteness and naiveté, a standing testimony to the kids of yester-years. While the Flipkart kids playing adults or the McDonalds smarty-pants boy reflects the smart, tech-savvy generation of today. Get prepared for some amazing stories.

She made you love Rasna

AG Krishnamurthy was behind the ad that gave us the cute little Rasna girl. The sheer simplicity of this ad makes it adorable. As we talked of the Doordarshan days, I requested AGK to tell us some stories about the Rasna ad.

Who was she, the Rasna girl?

*'Her name is **Ankita Jhaveri**. We wanted to use a kid in the ad, a very cute one. So we began auditioning and came across Ankita Jhaveri. She was just two and a half years old then. She had this very fancy, different haircut which pushed her cuteness a notch ahead. I chose her because she was a small and a bit chubby kid. Looking at her, the first feeling you have is that you want to cuddle her. I believed, she was perfect for the ad. As when people see the ad, everyone wishes to have such a cute kid.'*

Why a small kid, for a product that a mother buys and makes?

'The first step to make this ad was a research that we conducted for Rasna. This was back in 1982. Rasna wanted us to find out who buys and who consumes their product. Thus, in the research, we found that the Mother buys the product but it is the child who insists on it being bought. We found kids saying, "Mamma we want Rasna". Thus, it occurred to us that if we want this brand to grow, we will have to have a kid protagonist in the ad. That is how the decision to use a kid was taken.

The next step we took, was to create a script for the ad, what will the kid do. The anchor of the script I got, was by simply observing my kids. My daughter used to play with dolls

and often I saw her talking to them and personifying them and weaving her own stories. This for me was a very interesting way of portraying Rasna, as a drink loved by kids and thus, bought by moms. In the ad we have Ankita surrounded by soft toys. She is talking to them and telling them, "I have two glasses of Rasna. One for you and one for me. And if you can't drink that … I will have your glass also!" In this way, she consumes both the glasses. Also, the insight we had at hand was, that kids love orange and hence, Orange Rasna became the key flavor. The ad was that simple!'

So how did the famous line – 'I love you Rasna' came about?

'Once the script was ready, we were looking at an apt tagline kind of way of ending it. For the same, I was speaking to the copy-writer and we happened to discuss the idea. "Why can't we simply say – I love you Rasna". Yes! It is a silly tagline, very on the face, but after all a kid is going to say it and kids express very unabashedly. They very honestly say, "I love you Mom and Dad". And our hunch was correct! The silly line did wonders!'

How was the experience shooting with her? Was she mischievous?

'She was really little and it was difficult to make such a small child act. It was a task making her understand what we wanted and what we were saying. So we just let her be, gave her the toys and let her play with them. We took baby steps for everything. In fact, it took us three days to shoot the ad. I believe, it was the first time ever in Indian advertising that one had a kid protagonist.'

What impact did this ad command?

'It was a tremendous success! Her hairstyle became a fashion statement and trend. Rasna became a rage and so did the tagline. Letters began pouring in from parents. Even kids of affluent personalities were requesting us to feature their child in the Rasna ad. We had a lot of pressure, sometimes even

Dhirubhai Ambani would simply pass on a recommendation to us, although he never did force anything on us.'

As I dive into comprehending the charm and power, the little ones add to our thirty-second stories, I take the next big plunge. Our conversation would be incomplete, if I don't share the thrill of making an ad for Johnson & Johnson; a brand that is synonymous to new-born babies and toddlers. A brand that is also an equivalent to a mother's love.

Many years back, an ad of Johnson & Johnson talcum powder, which featured a mother talking to her 6 month-old baby and the baby reacting, swept the audience off its feet. Its cuteness quotient has lived ever since in the minds of the consumers, especially the part where the mother says, "Hai na papa buddhu?" and the kid as a reaction, puts his hand on his forehead and smiles naughtily. I was a part of the team that made this spectacle happen. Let me narrate some incidents of how challenging it was and still is, to make ads with such small babies.

Not a child's play

Madhu Noorani from Lintas, Chax (KS Chakravarty) and I, we as a team were given the mandate to craft an ad for Johnson's baby powder. Back then, a lot of new players were entering the market with baby powders, and hence, Johnson & Johnson felt

it was apt to reinforce its brand and product leadership. They wanted to communicate how their baby powder is a superior product - since it is sterilized. But this was to be communicated in a rather simple and engaging manner. We got thinking as a team and a very interesting insight struck us. Mothers' usually talk to their little ones about their husbands (i. e. their father). This conversation also happens, when the baby is in the womb. Back then, my son was about a year old and hence, I understood the chemistry that a baby and the mother shared. We decided to anchor around this insight – "A conversation between a mother and a child, where-in the mother talks about her husband and the kid reacts accordingly". Now, we reached the phase of writing the script, Madhu wrote the script, wherein the mother is cribbing about her husband to her little baby. **Shripad Nadkarni** headed the Johnson & Johnson team, back then. Once the script was approved, it was time to roll.

Ram Madhvani was the director of the ad and **Barun Da** was the cinematographer. Shooting this ad was no child's play. It was about getting an engaging conversation between a model and a six-month-old toddler who cannot speak. Yet, the conversation happens just through reactions. First of all, Ram ensured that we hired a completely air conditioned studio. In those days, Mumbai had a few such studios. Ram is a meticulous director, he gives his 100 per cent to whatever he does. He is someone who will also keep a back-up for back-up.

This was the first time he was shooting a commercial with a baby in it. He was so particular, that on the day of the shoot, he did not allow a single visitor or crew-member to be on the set. In an ad film, usually you will have about a hundred crew-members working. However, none of them were allowed on the set for this ad. He ensured that the baby was extremely comfortable and wasn't disturbed while sleeping. In fact, he had asked us to remove our shoes outside the studio and tip-toe in. The only noise apart from the mother and the baby that we could hear was that of the 35mm camera's beep.

Along with Ram we had yet another highly particular personality i. e. our cinematographer; Barun Da who takes

the longest to light a set. If there was an award given out for the time taken for lighting, he would create a record. He is an expert in soft lighting and since we were shooting for a brand like Johnson & Johnson, we wanted the lighting to be very soft and dreamy. Barun Da took hours to perfectly light the set. Each harsh light was passed through multiple layers of tracing paper, reflectors and bounced to create a lovely effect. We had used the most expensive lights, the HMI lights back then. Ram had booked all available HMI lights for the ad, and four sets i. e. the bathroom, bedroom, living room and the pack shot set were completely lit and kept ready. Since we were using so many lights, we had to keep the temperature of the room under control through air-conditioners.

Now the question is how did we shoot? There were no special effects used in this ad. We kept the camera rolling and asked the mother to play with the baby. Simultaneously, we kept capturing the varied expressions. At one point, the mother puts her hand on the forehead and the baby repeated the action. That is how we got the "Hai na papa buddhu?" reaction. We shot the mother and her dialogue separately and then, patched the entire commercial on the editing table; matching reactions to the conversation. For a thirty second ad, we shot for two and half days. Each day, we used to get four to five shots. We used to pack up by five in the evening, because we did not want the baby or the mother to get tired. This is how the entire ad was made.

Working for this brand was always exciting. Often, I had to explain myself to expecting couples, as to why was I observing them. I used to keep looking for good-looking pregnant women, so as to get a beautiful new-born for the brand. It was an awkward situation, which would finally dissipate when I would hand over my visiting card and explain my role.

For Johnson & Johnson, babies are as their products. But the ad world has also witnessed art, where "cuteness" has been leveraged to create stories of products that have little to do with children. I met **Priti Nair,** who was behind the brilliant campaign for Surf Excel – "Daag Acche hai". A detergent ad, that for the first time did not cast a mother or a

female and instead, banked upon the presence of just two little kids - a brother-sister duo. She shares how this bold decision happened.

A Dirty Good

'Daag Ache hai' as a line itself, sounds revolutionary! Plus you just casted two little kids in the backdrop of a simple story and together, these simple yet bold ingredients rendered into brilliance. How did it all happen

'When we were planning to launch Surf Excel, the ongoing discussion was to adopt the ongoing multinational ad of it for India. The crux of that ad was, that the "kids should get dirty". We felt that this wasn't very relevant for India, because dirt and getting dirty was rather routine. Thus, we knew we had to tweak the approach. It was essential to get the approach right, because it was a launch; i. e. big canvas advertising. To add, Surf's history already had spectacles like "Lalitaji" and "Dhoondte reh jaaoge". One thing we had decided, was to adopt the tag line as it. Internationally the tagline was "Dirt is good". We simply translated it into Hindi, which became "Daag ache hai".

Yes! We were nervous about the tagline too, since it was a literal translation and sometimes, when you have something so

simple at hand, you tend to ponder over it a bit too much. But after much deliberation we decided to keep the tagline – "Daag ache hai". Now, we had to work on the script. We came up with a simple one, where an elder brother and his younger sister are on their way home from school. Suddenly, the little girl falls into a puddle and starts crying. To make her stop crying and to cheer her up, the elder brother begins hitting the puddle and in turn, gets all dirty. His clothes are completely soiled! That is when you get the message, that if, while doing something good you get dirty, then it is okay!'

What was the germ to this simple script?

'Arun Iyer in our team, came with the idea. He shared an observation that often, when kids get hurt through a table or fall on the floor, parents scold and hit the table or the floor to pacify them. It is from this insight we developed the script.'

So no adult in the script?

'We had written two types of script. One just featured the kids, and the other had an old man who admonished the boy for getting dirty, and then the mother steps in and says - It's okay! Because he is getting dirty for a purpose. Somehow our gut feel and heart lied with the one that just featured the kids. An old man and a mother were just adding unnecessary layers and complicating the story.'

Why two scripts?

'For the first time, a detergent ad wasn't featuring any mother or home-maker! It was quite a bold decision to take. The client was a bit hesitant. While we were going for the shooting, they had asked Abhinay Deo; the film director, to shoot both the scripts. There was a huge debate on whether the only kids' story was the right way forward, because the script did not have any adult, no product window and there was no stain being removed. So, there was a visible apprehension - whether it would work or not. In fact, the research team had got a lukewarm response on

the ad in its dipstick study, which brands regularly do. But by the time the results had come, the ad was already aired and the reality was of stark contrast. It was hugely popular and soared through the roof. After that ad, happy dirty children became the part of the brand language.'"

Where did you find the kids, who played the brother-sister duo?

'Abhinay as you know, is the king of casting. When we had written the script, we were very sure that the boy should not be a typical advertising looking kid. We wanted an unconventional kid, who isn't the typical chubby, gora-chitta type of a kid. We needed a boy who looked a bit brasher, bolder and had a shade of mawaali-giri in him. We finally found the boy. He was from Mumbai; about ten-years old. It was yet another bold decision, because back then, for a hair-oil commercial clients would also see the teeth of the model. But here the client, especially ***Gopal Vithal*** *put faith in us and allowed us to do something different. As for the boy featured in the ad, he was a very sweet kid. As for the girl, at first Abhinay and I found her very 'advertising;, she was chubby, very cute, with two ponytails. But we felt the boy's unconventionality will make it a good contrast and hence, we chose her. She was about six-years old. All that this ad had, was a story and two kids. We weren't even changing the location. So we had to be really sure that the combination would work! And it did!'*

Where did you shoot it? Were you there at the shoot?

'It was shot in Ooty. Unfortunately, I could not be present at the shoot due to the Cannes Advertising Festival. But Abhinay took care of it. I remember, the puddle we made was of warm water, a little bit of mud and brown colour. Since it was cold in Ooty and we were shooting early morning, we had to ensure that the puddle was warm and there was no harm to the kids. I also know that to trip that girl, we had to put a thread in between, inducing her to fall suddenly. In that process, she actually cried a couple of times. But we had no options, except pulling such tricks because kids cannot fall on purpose no matter what. We

finished shooting in a day's time. Abhinay also shot the other version which had the adults, but I insisted on keeping it offline and only showing the one with the kids. The client was bold enough to have trusted us!'

A bold decision, an unconventional approach is what led "Surf Excel – Daag Ache hai" to phenomenal success. While kids are often used for their charm and cuteness, the key is to strike for relevance through stories. Being a detergent, the safest way to communicate would have been to talk about its stain-removing abilities and have a homemaker validating it. But instead, they chose a path that took an emotional route. As I talk about unconventionality, I'mcompelled to talk about an ad that featured kids as adults! Yes, It is this kahani mein twist that made the Flipkart ad an instant hit. **Kartik Iyer;** the man behind the ad doled out stories as to how they flipped the kart literally.

Flipping the kart

It was a campaign that made an online store relevant to even middle-aged paunchy men like me. Until then, online shopping was something the tech savvy eighteen year old did. Yes, we have seen ads that have featured children but this one has a twist like never before. Kids playing adults combined with day-to-day funny human stories; the ads were a treat by themselves. I spoke to Kartik Iyer; the creator of the campaign and so went our conversation.

Kids who play adults! Quite an idea! How did you think of an idea like that?

All enthused, Kartik began, *'We had just launched an ad for Book category of Flipkart it was a nice Fairy-tale like commercial of a Granny and the Mouse.* ***Prakash Varma*** *had directed the commercial, it was very well crafted. Post this ad, the plan was to roll out a campaign that would talk about Flipkart selling other categories too. The aim was to make people visit Flipkart and convert people to online shopping and educate them.*

For this campaign, we knew we had no option but to hit a homerun. So we got thinking as to how do we spice up the mundane and make it awesome. That is when, the idea of using kids occurred to us, because with kids comes in this natural charm, cuteness, lovability and a certain unexplainable trust factor. But we felt a bit more was required and hence we thought of a twist, let's get these kids to behave and act like adults and instead of using their own voice, let us use the voice of the grown-up. So, with this twist in the tale we finalized the idea.'

What happened next?

'Next we began scripting. ***Naren****, my copy partner, and I were the ones who wrote the scripts. All we did was pick-up simple, day-to-day human stories which were characterized by wit and weaved them as ads. And it completely worked. People began relating with Flipkart and felt, "here is a brand which is like me"; the ads being about regular people and their normal quirks. After the first ad campaign, Flipkart experienced a 900% growth. The kids were so loved, that the format was carried on for a period of two and half years. It never reached an impasse or got boring because it kept taking new forms as we kept telling new stories.'*

Who directed the films?

*"**Ayappa** was the director and it was his madness that gave the film a whole new level. All those amazing little moments that you enjoy in the film are Ayappa's brilliance. He wouldn't leave until he would get what he wanted. He isn't quite a child friendly person and yet, he pulled this one impeccably! As for the Director of Photography for each ad series, we used a different one. We had worked with **Tassadoq**, **Kartik and Vijay**. And as the music director, we had **Sameerudin**.'*

One of the most popular Ad of the series is the little kid playing Arnab Goswami, share a bit about that?

'For the first time we had an ad, which did a spoof. I remember, we found this boy and felt he looked like Arnab, so we came up with the idea and got him dressed like Arnab. We then showed him the clips of Arnab's show and asked him to observe how he behaved. He picked up the nuances and delivered brilliantly'.

Coming to the highlight of the ad, the children. Where did you find them, how was the experience working with them, were they actors?

*'The kids were from Mumbai; all fell under the age bracket of seven-nine years. We had a well-set process - two week before the shoot, we would finalize the cast and then **Shawn,** our theatre director would conduct a workshop, where-in he would train the kids to behave like adults and teach them what they are to do. Some of the kids had acted previously, some were freshers. We would then decide on their looks, costumes and so on.*

As for working with these kids, it was an amazing experience. I was flabbergasted each day with their professionalism and sincerity. This is a whole new generation! I remember we had one girl who would talk about continuity in shots. She would say, "In the previous shot, I was wearing this nose ring. Now it isn't there"! These are kids. I was amazed to know how cool this generation is. It is magical to watch kids act like adults and I

guess, this magic worked for the ad, especially the adult voices on them sounded hilarious.'

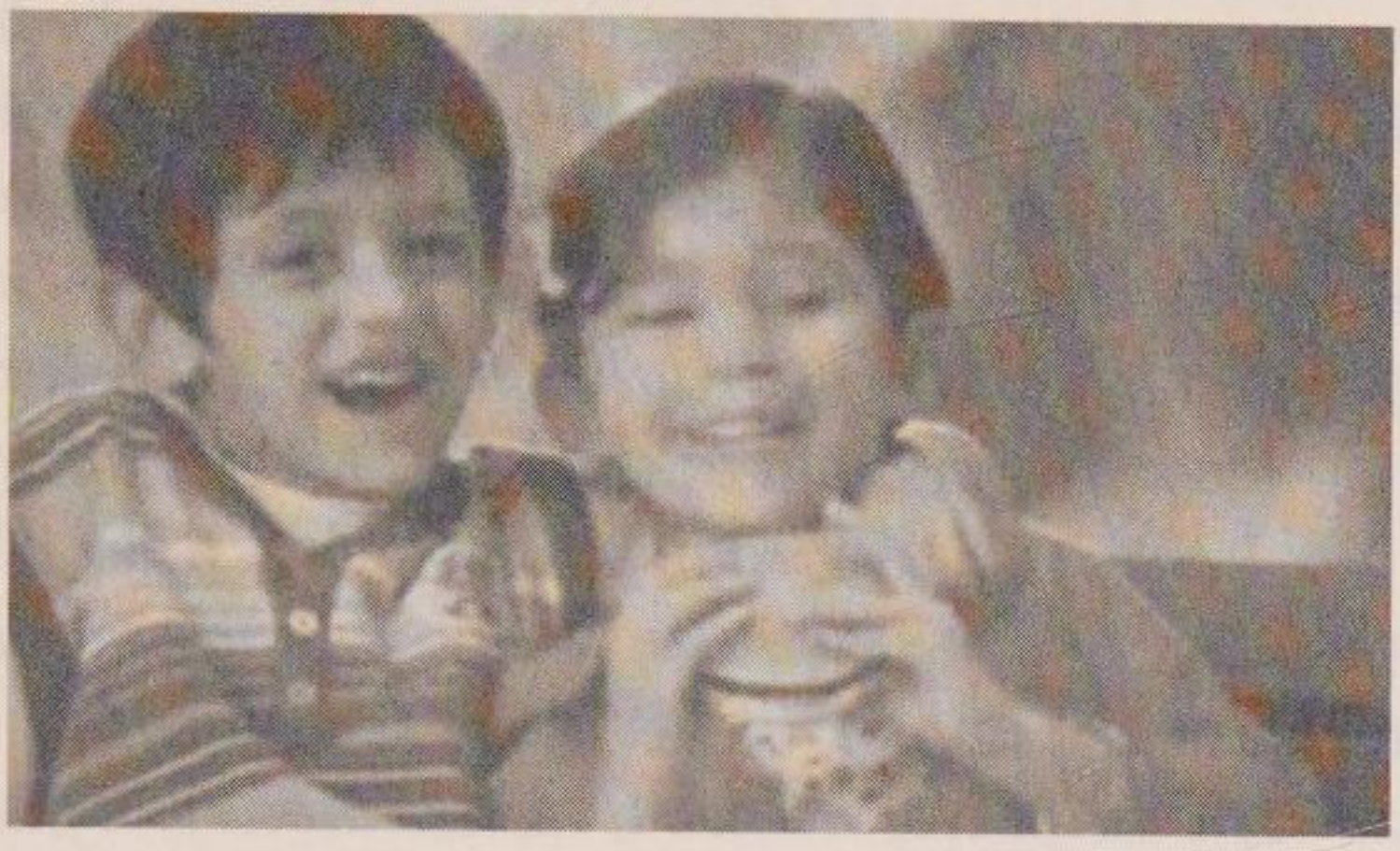
Yet another unique ingredient to this ad is its sets right?

'Yes! We had scaled down everything to size, be it the table or the chair. Even a little dustbin was built to size. The entire set looked like a small doll-house; it was a fairy tale setting. ***Manisha*** *was the art director who made this possible. It was so much fun working in this little fantasyland. Often, one of us would trip working on the set, since the things around were small and would come in the way. It was great fun!'*

Did this ad make any kid famous?

'Most of the kids got many more commercials. One boy, I remember, got a chance to work in the film Agneepath; the new version. Pops, I feel it is the kids who have done a lot for this ad. They have become an identity of Flipkart. This ad has been a one of its kind experience for me.'

As Kartik narrated his experience of working with kids and mentioned that kids these days are street-smart, it brings back the memories of one of the ads which Nitesh Tiwari and I did. Mc Donalds – "Shukar hai" campaign. The idea was to communicate the "unique prices" of Mc Donalds, using a cute and witty story. This resulted in an ad that has a smart little boy and a cute little girl, a dilemma "Girlfriend bahut demanding hoti hai" and the solution - a burger for just Rs. 25. I talked about the overarching idea while exploring the shade of humor in the ads. Now, I have Nitesh who tells us on-the-set stories and the experience of working with the little ones.



Puppy Love

'I remember, I ended up directing the film because we had dearth of time and in that short notice, no director was available. Usually, as soon as a brief comes in, I urge my team to write scripts. Because I believe that every talent should get its due. And if I get a great story from my team, I let that talent prosper and give them the credit they truly deserve. Just in case, if no one is able to crack a script then I take over. For the Mc Donald's ad the latter happened. My team tried but the scripts they came up with didn't work, so I wrote some scripts overnight. The next morning, I remember coming to you and sharing them with you. One of it being the little boyfriend and girlfriend story.

Now I was also to direct it, and I always believe in one thing when it comes to working with kids, i. e. you need to know how to get, what you want out of them. And this, I learnt elaborately when I did the feature film Chillar Party with ***Vikas Bahl****.'*

So how did you manage to extract that immense cuteness wrapped in wit for this ad?

'Before I could begin shooting, I was facing a little issue. As a director, I usually believe in adding value to the script I have got, by innovating in my own little ways. But as for this ad, I

was also the scriptwriter and often, I find it difficult to make a value-add to my own writing. As a writer, you have given it all and for the same script you walk in as a director, suffering from the tunnel vision as a writer. Adding value becomes tricky, but I was desperate to make a difference.

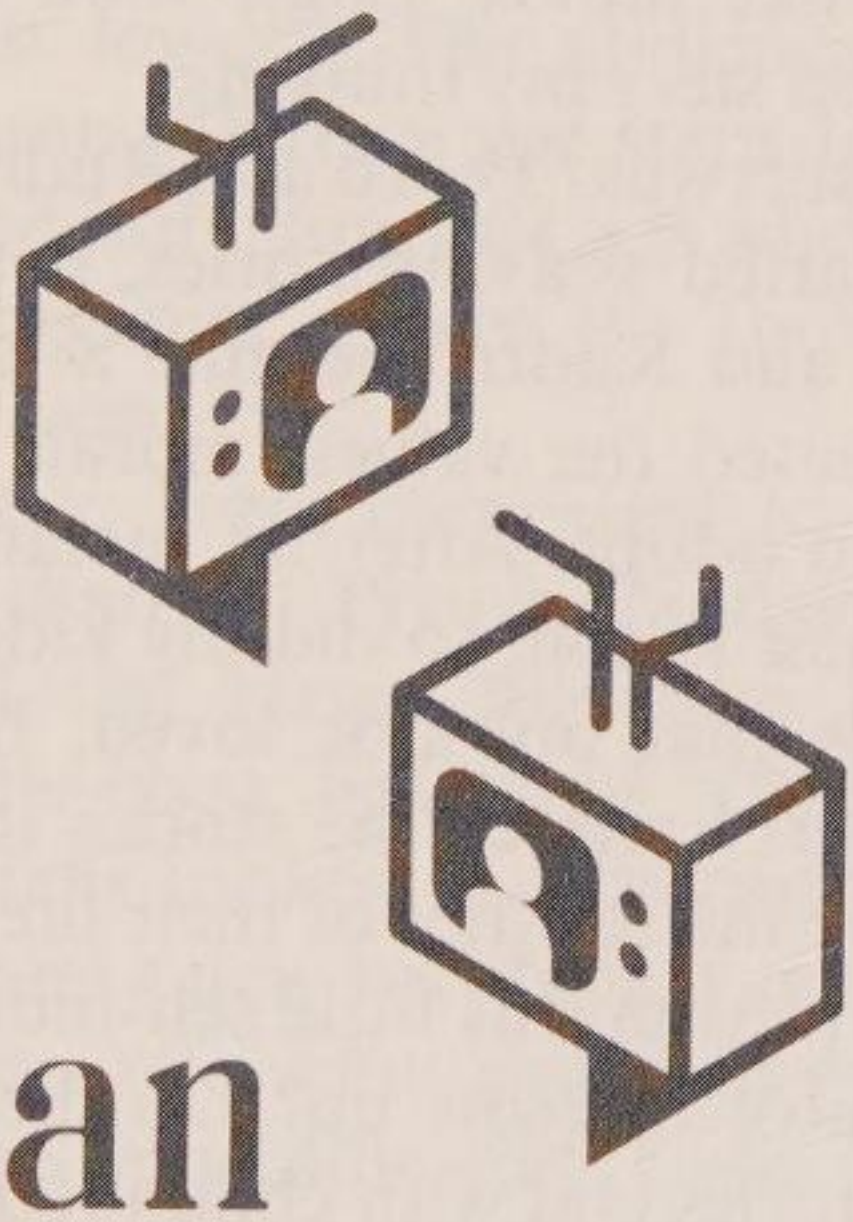
Hence I kept thinking and realized that the arena left for me is to improvise on the performances of the kids. Thus, I decided, that when the girl kid says, "Par mujhe to sirf Mc Aloo Tikki chahiye", the reaction to her statement would be that the little boy looks at her with the corner of his eyes, then in front - at Mc Donalds and taps his pocket to see if he has money. Then he says, "Haan phir thik hai". So, the cute corner of the eye look he gives was my addition as a director. It was an element which wasn't present in the script.'

And if I am not wrong to get that look you had to play a trick, right?

'Yes Pops! During the shoot when I told the little boy to look from the corner of his eye, he would simply turn his head towards her and not just his eye. He was finding it difficult to follow what I was saying and I was finding it difficult, to explain what I wanted. We kept trying and his head was moving all over the place. I could have let go of the shot, but the director in me did not allow me to do so. I knew that sly look will add a lot of charm to the ad. Hence, I did not give up! Finally, after many attempts, I was discussing a possible solution with our Director of Photography; ***Ravi Verma****, an ace* Director of Photography *who has done films like Ram Leela and Barfi.*

In the discussion, I realized that kids are very good at following specific instructions and thus, an idea struck. I asked Ravi sir if I make the kid follow something, can he keep that object out of the frame and just shoot the boy? He said he would try. Thus, I took one mic and approached the little boy and told him to look intently at the mic and follow it wherever it moves. I kept one guy at the monitor and asked him to see if it looks like the kid is watching from the corner of the eye of not. We decided to capture this from multiple angles, for it to

seem like he is looking at the girl. So while in the ad it seems he is slyly looking at the girl, in reality he is just concentrating on the mic. Chillar Party has taught me quite a lot, when it comes to working with kids - you can't simply get what you want by telling them ... you have to create scenarios to make it happen.'



The Human Connection

The Human Connection

Being a father was, and is, a challenge I adore. Often, when my mind is free from the clutter of a thoughtful rut, I quietly escape into the memories of my kids. Their childhood is where I spend the most amount of time. Those were the years, when as a parent I used to teach them values, morals and introduce in their mind, the simple mechanism of telling good from bad. At first, I just told them what I had to - "This isn't good", "This is bad" but somehow, what I told them, reached them as a cryptic message; a puzzle they could not decipher. I now had a challenge staring at me in the face; how to get through their clay-like minds. Logic took a back seat and I let my imagination steer my thinking.

The result was "Pedro and Rudro", two characters around whom I started weaving stories. Before going to bed, the tales of 'Pedro and Rudro' became a ritual and through them, I communicated the values, morals and habits that I wished my kids to adopt. After an instance, if 'Pedro and Rudro' learned their lesson, so did my kids. In these stories, I added ingredients that my kids loved, from enchanted forests to superheroes! I altered the stories to best suit their love for It and I wove the realities of their life in my imaginative stories. As I return from this little self-indulgent escape, I sigh. Why do they have to grow up? Do they miss Pedro and Rudro? Why do stories end with childhood?

But during one such nostalgic moment a realization hit me; who said stories end with childhood? Even after we grow up, our love for stories remains intact! This was a realization that was confirmed when I saw my daughter, a young lady glued to the television with a broad smile adorning her face, as she enjoyed her favorite ad. Every time an ad has managed to serve a piece of life in its thirty seconds, it has struck a chord with its audience. From the day "human emotion" became the new protagonist of Indian ads, we witnessed an overhaul. What was ushered in, was a new era of advertising. An era, when stories became more human, more Indian, more you, more me and more us!

Our first phase as advertisers was that of dream merchants. We believed that packaging glamour, western lifestyle, over-promising unreal models and blatant messages like "use this and be macho", "buy this and be beautiful" would do the trick for us. But somehow, we all knew, we were reaching an impasse. Somewhere, something didn't add up! Then came the time to put courage before convention ... and we witnessed some creative minds of the ad world take this brave step. What they did was simple. They dug into their own life experiences, delved into their past, observed humans as humans and rediscovered human truths as engaging insights! And Voila! A change took place.

These unique rules of engagement gave way to affinity, love, a new bonding and loyalty. The audience now had a relationship with the brand. I trace my steps back to the beginning of this phase and bring together ads where "human emotions" were the protagonist; where the thirty seconds captured nothing but our lives!

As I begin this journey, I am compelled to start with the corner stone of this change - Piyush Pandey's ads. He single-handedly changed the target audience from elite British Indians to middle-class heartland "Bharatvasis". He changed the way Indians looked at advertising! He has created many stars - given us a new vocabulary, made people love advertising more than television programming. Right from "Luna" finding a place in middle-class India to a nation celebrating the success of "Pappu" with Cadbury Dairy Milk to "Wah! Sunil Babu" from Asian Paints to celebrating real life characters in Fevicol. Piyush Pandey made the audience believe – "Kuch khaas hai hum sabhi mein, kuch swaad hai zindagi mein".

A 'Khaas' Ad

I have mentioned this gem of an ad earlier, when we were discussing about women in advertising. But so multi-dimensional is this ad that I can't write about human emotions without mentioning this ad again. No doubt the Ad Club of Mumbai voted this as the campaign of the century.

As mentioned earlier, the challenge was to change an ingrained belief that adults didn't have chocolates or at least, didn't have them openly. In this challenge, Piyush Pandey spotted a brilliant idea. As I sat back, relaxed at his humble abode's sea facing patio, I asked him, **"Piyush tell me where did it all start?"**

He continues after narrating, how he didn't like the earlier script of the father narrating a story to his daughter and dupes her to eat the chocolate. Piyush wrote the script on his way to USA with his family, on the back of his boarding pass. "Owing to my passion for cricket, I thought of a match at a nail-biting point, a tensed audience and in the audience, the batsman's girlfriend eating Cadbury and praying hard. The batsman hits a six and earns a clear win; elated she ducks the security, runs out on the field and breaks into a random dance, expressing her feelings unabashedly. All this with her Cadbury in her hand. The idea was to tell the audience that in each one of us, lives a little kid. With this idea I coined the lines "Kuch Khass hai hum sabhi mein" and "Asli swad zindagi ka" (The real taste of life).' This ad and the man behind it, shows how a complex human behavior could change by identifying a human insight, weaving a story around it and a simple minimalist visual treatment.

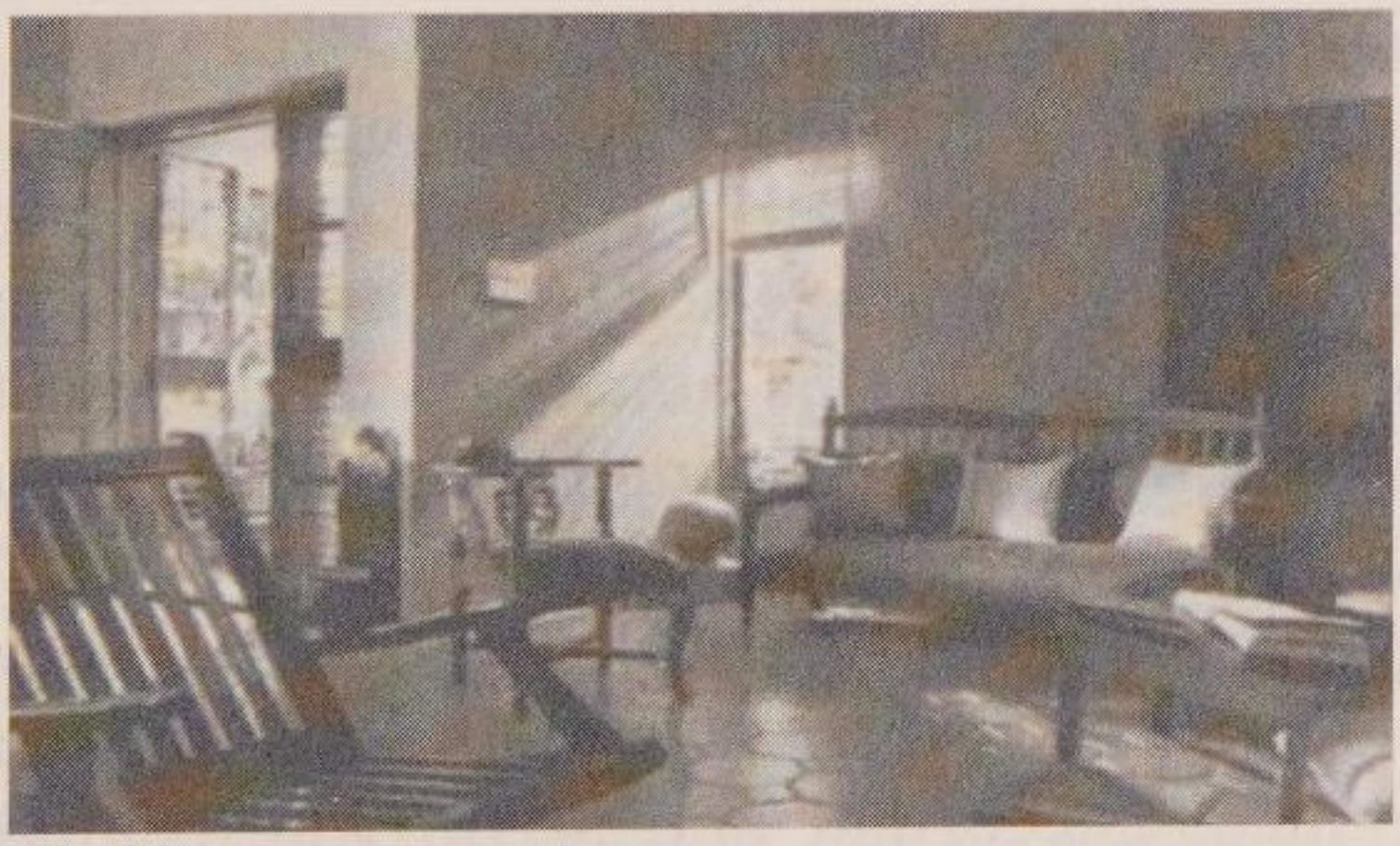
The next ad in this campaign witnessed montage ads, where-in during happy moments of life, the adults bring out the kids in themselves. This was depicted against the same background track. It was the magic of these sweet real-life moments that made Cadbury a part of our lives. It was because Piyush chose to narrate a story, that the audience could love and relate to the magic that happened. When you put a little bit of you, us and life in the ads, they transcend beyond just advertising, becoming an extension of us - a song we hum and a story we rush to watch on television.

Piyush's knack of personalising communication has given way to a genre of ads, which connect with human emotions. A knack that manifested itself beautifully, in yet another masterpiece crafted by him – the Asian Paints ad. This ad became an identity of every home. Paints by nature have been

a commodity, more of a functional requirement in a home and the decision on which paint to buy; both colors and brands, lay solely on the painter or the contractor. But Piyush, he made it an element of a family's identity, by creating an ad that wove the beauty of poetry into paints.

Passionately Painted Poetry

Asian Paints had made in-roads into the consumers' minds with its "mera wala cream" approach. But, the next destination of the journey was the consumers' heart. Paint was no longer a function, it was slowly becoming a statement of style and individuality. But the heart connects to aspects which are beyond just the look and feel. Thus, to build this connection, Piyush paved a way with family values. Every colony in India has witnessed that one home where everyone visits, where crickets matches are watched together, where kids come to play during summer holidays, where neighbors relish the evening tea with tastier gossip; a home that houses everyone. And each Indian wants such home to be theirs. Such are our Indian values, that sharing our space to create immortal memories is a part of our make. Piyush borrowed these ideas and transformed them into beautiful poetry and how.



This is what Piyush shares, *"We first did an ad for Onam with* ***Mahesh Mathai****, then Durga Puja with* ***Sumantra Ghosal****, followed by Pongal which we did with* ***Rajeev Menon****; as painting homes during festivals was a trend catching up fast. Post this, I began working on "Har ghar kuch kehta hai". For me, it was fantastic, because one day I just sat down and wrote it. I remember not editing, cutting or rewriting a single word of it. Once I finished writing, I just couldn't hold back. I called the client;* ***Amit Syngle*** *of Asian Paints and told him drop everything that he was doing and come to my office. He sensed my enthusiasm and honoring it, he did come as soon as possible. Once he came, I just read out what I had written and he started crying. That is how "Har ghar kuch kehta hai" happened.'*

"Kaise ek makaan chupke se ghar ban jata hai,
Kyun uss ghar ka darwaza hardum khula nazar ata hai,
Kyun padosi apne ghar se zyada iss ghar mein nazar aate hai,
Kabhi dal, kabhi chini, kabhi dal-chini mangne aa jaate hai,
Postman bhi sirf naam dekhke chitthi le aata hai,
Exams se pehle bachon ke best friends padhne yahin kyun aate hai?
Rotiya yahan pe kabhi ginn ke kyun nahi banti,
Kyun holi khelne poora mohalla yahin par chupta hai
Kyun Diwali ka pehla phataka yahin se phoonta hai,
Kyun cricket mein harte-harte yahan India jeet jaata hai
Kaise yeh ghar sab ki zindagi mein rang lata hai...
Har ghar chup-chap se yeh kehta hai ...
Ki andar ismein kaun rehta hai. . ."

This beautiful poetry found itself a visual robe in the form of equally poetic film direction. The visuals had no face and no characters. The spirit of this home was communicated through shots like little feet dangling from a bunk-bed and shadows rejoicing the Indian cricket team's victory. What became the protagonist of the ad, were its impeccably painted walls. The varied colours communicated the varied moods and values. The bright and joyful walls, laughter echoing and the emotion-laced voice of Piyush reciting his poetry are the simple elements that made, "Har ghar kuch

kehta hai" - a home that we all want and we all believe we have.

Piyush you did the voice-over, why so?

'Once everything was ready we needed an appropriate voice for the ad, we tried many voice-over artists, but somehow, we weren't able to find what we needed. At one point, Amit Syngle (VP Asian Paints) said, why don't you render your voice? Since it's your poem I guess you would be able to emote it best. Thus, I did the voiceover.'

Any anecdote attached to this ad?

'I have one which is a bit on the personal front. One of my friends, ***Prem Mehta*** *(Ex CEO of Lowe Lintas) had just bought a new house. He was finding a name for it, to put on the name-plate and so, he asked me. In reply I told him, 'Everyone names their house, why don't you do something different!"' He was intrigued and excitedly asked what should I do? I replied, "Buy a really long board and we will write on it - 'Har ghar chup chap se yeh kehta hai ki andar ismein Prem Mehta hai, Prem Mehta hai!" He realized I was pulling his leg and broke into laughter. He said, "Yaar! Saale tu bahut badmaash hai!".'*

That's quite a story. Piyush I believe this ad had versions too.

'We did varied versions of it. In one, we showed an entire generation - right from the grandmother. The recent one is of an army man and his newly wedded wife. We also took a separate route of "Sunil babu" and the two brothers. We have doled out many ads for Asian Paints but "Har ghar kuch kehta hai" has become its core identity.'

It is in these simple insights of life, that we find beauty. We as ad makers, hone our observational skills constantly, because as we live life, we also keep observing it in search of a treasure. There are times when we find the treasure right there, unfolding in front of our eyes; inside the four walls of our home. Piyush picked one such insight and turned it into a romance that defies time - an ad for SBI Life Insurance.

An Ageless Beauty

An adorable old couple, an eternal romance, a piece of diamond jewellery and a sparkling smile – they all came together and became an ad of SBI Life Insurance. In a subtle and heartwarming way, the ad told us the virtues of investing and saving. It featured a couple in their mid-seventies. The husband hands a newspaper to his wife, pointing the object of her desire in it, asking her, "Yehi dekh rahi thi na tum kuch din pehle?". As she intriguingly looks at the ad in the newspaper, her husband suddenly hands her a pretty box and says, "Mein le aya", it's a diamond jewel. The wife surprised and overwhelmed over this gesture, squals, "Pagal ho gaye ho kya? Kitne ka hai..." and he says, "Kuch nahin..." To which she says, "Nahin! Nahin! Lauta do..." and he explains to her that it is Valentine's day; a day when you gift something special to someone you love. She blushes and says, "Ab iss umar mein kahan heere pehnugi...", to which he replies as a matter of fact, "Arey *heere ko kya pata tumhari umar?*". *This was* a line that lucidly melted our hearts and made us experience the joy of being in love, of growing old together, of the joy of gifting a loved one without worrying about money! The ad ended with a voice over of Piyush saying, *"Taaki pyaar ke beech paiso ki kami nah aaye"*.

Piyush found the inspiration of this ad in his own life, *"It's the story of my mother. She always wanted to own a diamond jewel but she never asked anyone for it. One day, my brother Prasoon and I went and got a diamond jewel for her. When we gifted her, she said "Iss umar mein, heero ka kya karungi..." I simply added a line extra for the ad and what we got was a wonderful film. I thoroughly enjoyed doing this ad film.*

What is it about this film do you love?

'It's shot brilliantly, without getting carried away! The emotions of a seventy-five year old couple is captured. Neither of them are trying to do anything; they were just being themselves.'

While the script exuded magic, what made it a fairytale was its direction. **Prasoon Pandey,** who also spoke to me about his experience while making this ad, had many stories to share. Our talk with respect to SBI Life Insurance ad, "Heera kya jaane tumhari umar kya hai!" began with Prasoon narrating a conversation which transpired with his client.

*'Pops I was with a client today ... and he pushed me in to nostalgia mode!, He wanted to know, why can't we do casting, the way we had done for the SBI Life Insurance ad. So I replied with my side of the story, about the film's casting and said, "Kya tha na, uss ad ki casting ke waqt, woh kahani itni sweet thi ki ... I was driven to believe that there will be an added magic in it, if the couple we casted, would be a genuine real life couple." I followed my belief and went auditioning across seven cities. We auditioned only genuine couples, who were stage actors from a previous time. And finally we found them - **Atmaram Bhende** and his wife.*

The emotions this film culled were such that it would have been impossible to avail them, by just instructing as a director. For instance, in the film, when he says "Heere ko kya pata tumhari umar", Now, the line is utterly romantic and only a real couple could whip up such a chemistry, where the wife in response naturally blushes. The reaction needn't be romantic, it would be an expression which communicates – her thinking coyly, "Mere budhe ko kya ho gaya hai iss umar mein" - aisa

sharmana aap sikha nahin sakte. I have seen my parents, when my father used to suddenly recite a poetry for my mother in front of everyone. Her reaction wouldn't be, "Awww! So sweet", her reaction used to be a lot of hassle filled with blush, "Kya hai yeh, ghar mein sabke saamne!".

Yet another moment in the film, which I could have never been able to achieve as an instructing director was, when he says, "Dekho mein le aya" and hands over the gift. She has an expression of surprise, blended with shock and happiness, with an overdose of shyness. I could not ask them to act like that, for asking would have had ruined the emotion. What they did, at that moment, was their own creation and chemistry of so many years. Thus, the decision of casting a real life couple worked amazingly well for the ad.'

What about the couple today? Are you in touch with them?

'Asha ji did two more commercials for me - one of SBI Life again and the other one was for Asian Paints. Then unfortunately, she passed away. Atmaram ji is still around. I think, he featured in the movie Lage Raho Munna Bhai.'

You know Prasoon, I too have an anecdote to share, with respect to this commercial which I had shared with Piyush too, after the ad was released. After seeing the commercial, my father too, had purchased a diamond jewel for my mother, although it wasn't the first time that he had gifted a diamond to her. But somehow, the ad re-kindled that little desire of romance, joy and love of gifting something to her.

'Pops That is so sweet. You know, it is such moments that inspire ads and such ads, which inspire moments! We had done yet another version for SBI Life Insurance for the same theme, "Taaki rishton ke beech dooriyan nah aaye". It had two old sisters travelling a long way in a train, to meet their little brother to celebrate his birthday. They lovingly call him "chotu". Yet again, one of the sisters was Asha ji. And one thing that I believe, makes these ads work, is that we keep improvising till the end. Not only do I improvise, I change dialogues and stories altogether.

In the second version of the SBI Life Insurance ad, I had the feeling to inculcate the romance attached with train journeys in

the film. Train journeys have an innate romance in them, which don't exist in bus or airplane journeys. It has got to do with three things - One is the orientation of the seat; in a train, you sit facing each other; second is the length of the journey, for so long you are sitting across a stranger, you probably have to sit like that for a day or more; third thing is we are not just sitting in front of people still, due to the train running, everyone in it has their head continuously bobbing as if nodding in agreement to the person sitting opposite (Prasoon literally acts the movement which makes it hilarious). The situation is such, that at the end, you have to have a conversation with your co-traveller.

Thus, I was inclined to add this romance in the film; so I wanted to show a conversation these two old sisters have with their co-passengers – and to make things interesting, I wanted a contrast. Since my protagonists are old ladies, sitting opposite to them will be a newly married couple. Keeping the situation in mind, I wrote the dialogues – wherein, they are answering to the newly married couple. They want to know where they are going. And I wanted to mislead the audience and reveal at the end, that the brother is equally old. So they say in reply, that they are going to meet their brother. So they counter question as to why didn't he come to meet them. So they reply, "Chota hai na, bahane banata hai". So this was the conversation I built. When they ask questions, the old ladies reply. Later, when I began editing, I thought of removing all the questions and keeping only the answers. The questions were to be understood automatically. So, I just showed the answer, "Bhai se milne jaa rahe hai". Second shot, you jump cut to, "Chota hai na, bahane banata hai" - this style of editing gave the film a fantastic character. I removed all the questions and left them to imagination! Actually, we hadn't written the script in that manner. It was something that we changed on the editing table.'

Just like SBI Life Insurance ad had its genesis rooted in a reality, something which Piyush had witnessed in his life in the form of his mother's secret desire to own a diamond jewel; yet another experience of his life that he chose to morph into a fantastic story, was his mother's food. Piyush's mother made the tastiest Marwadi food. It is this flavour of love that he rendered into an ad for Fortune Oil - one of his most recent makes. His love for the food cooked by a mother was ingrained

in him, back when he started advertising too; a time when we did his first ad for Rath Vanaspati. I attempted to capture this love wrapped in ads.'

The Flavour of Love

A resilient, almost stubborn grandmother, doing the rounds of the hospital day –after-day, in an attempt to feed her grandson, who had been admitted there. Her special dal; one which is his favourite. A strict nurse, who finally gives in to the grandmother's resilience and a crescendo that makes you cry. A simple message from Adani Wilmar's brand Fortune Oil – "Ghar ka Khana, Ghar ka Khana hota hai". It was a bold ad, because in a time when television as a medium is getting expensive by the day, we have Piyush craft an ad, which is 4.38 minutes long! The ad, I am sure made each one of us cry, Piyush shared how this happened.

'The brief I got for this ad was fantastic! ***Pranav Adani,*** *who handles Adani Wilmar part of the business called and said, "I want to have dinner with you. Can you come to Ahmedaḅad?" So I went to Ahmedabad and during dinner, he said a beautiful thing, "I am tired of these commercials of edible oil, where we show frying of Puris, Samosas and all. Piyush, kuch aisa banao ki hilla de, rula de!" That was my brief. He didn't say anything else.*

I realized, I was given a really big and prestigious brief. He had given me this huge blank canvas and it was amazing. I got back and got thinking for a while and it hit me! Why not go back to the good old insight, "Ki ghar ka khana, and ghar ka khana hota hai". Keeping this insight in mind, I wrote the story; the script. I then called ***Vivek Kakad*** *and my partner* ***Sukesh,*** *sharing the script with them. Work on the screenplay began. I had the screenplay written ten times, before we finalized it. And then, we made the film. Once it was done we watched it and cried a number of times.'*

But it turned out to be really long, how did the client react?

'It was 4.38 minutes long! Our TV breaks are that long. When the film was complete and before showing it to the client, Vivek and I were on a flight going somewhere and I told him, "Yeh film mein TV pe chalunga". He was a bit taken aback with my statement and replied, "Kya baat kar rahe ho?" So I said, "Kya hua hai na … jitni badi mujhe brief mili thi nah, utni badi film ban gayi hai! If they like it as much as I do, yeh TV pe chalegi". He burst out laughing.

I went over to meet the client and played the film. No one asked me about the length. At the end, all that happened was everyone started crying. Then finding the right moment I said, "You know! It will be a shame if you don't run this on TV. I know, I am asking for the impossible but you have to give it a shot". They asked me to speak to Star and I did, I told them I have some work which I am really proud of … but that there is an issue and I want to run it anyhow. They agreed, though they wanted to understand the issue. So I said, that the length of the film is 4.38 minutes. They still agreed, spoke to the client and decided on the terms. Well, the film did make it to television!'

Didn't the length bother you?

'No Pops! Because for me, it was a graph to a relationship. Every day, was a like a station before the destination - their fights, their chemistry … all that needed time! Only then I could justify the climax.'

Yes! The climax, it unfailingly leaves one teary-eyed. Who wrote those lines?

*'**Nitin Pradhan**, a young boy. I met him and told him, "See, I have written everything. All I need is just two lines from you. Tu bus yeh do liney likh de!" He came back with what we all loved. As I read the lines, "Poora bachpan zuban pe rakh diya, teri aanch ka utra jo mene chakh liya!" I told him what you have written has the depth of **Gulzar!** , That it is magic. The lines were very Gulzar. **Swaroop Khan** sung that bit and **Abhishek Arora** did the music.'*

As I spoke about the Fortune Oil ad with Piyush, I was thrown back into nostalgia, as I remembered one of his first creations - an ad for "Rath Vanaspati", which too, had been built on the magic of home-cooked food, especially by a mother. And thus, I asked him, "Piyush, this reminds me of one of your first ads - Rath Vanaspati. Back then, it was truly a brave attempt, considering the conventional approach we had'.

*'Rath Vanaspati started from the thought, that all of us believe our mother's cooking is the best. It was a Delhi office account and back then, I was stationed there. So, they gave me the mandate and I made it clear in the first go, that I will not do a regular ad which had a lady making samosa. I have this insight and I will work on a different concept. I was given a head-go. The first thing I did, was pick up the track. I had just recorded a song with **Kavita Krishnamurthy.** The lyrics were, "Teri har adaa mein pyaar hai, sabka tujhe khayal hai, sabhi ke dilon ko tu jeetle, tere haath mein woh kamaal hai" I made them listen to the track and said, that visually all I will show is just two hands cooking. They were a bit taken aback, as that was very unconventional ... but I put my foot down. When the ad was complete they loved it.'*

An exciting ride!

As we walked down nostalgia lane, we crossed one of the greatest milestones of Piyush's journey, the ad that made the phrase "Chal meri Luna", and the Moped Luna a rave back then. It was one of Piyush's first campaigns.

Tell us how the ride kick-started?

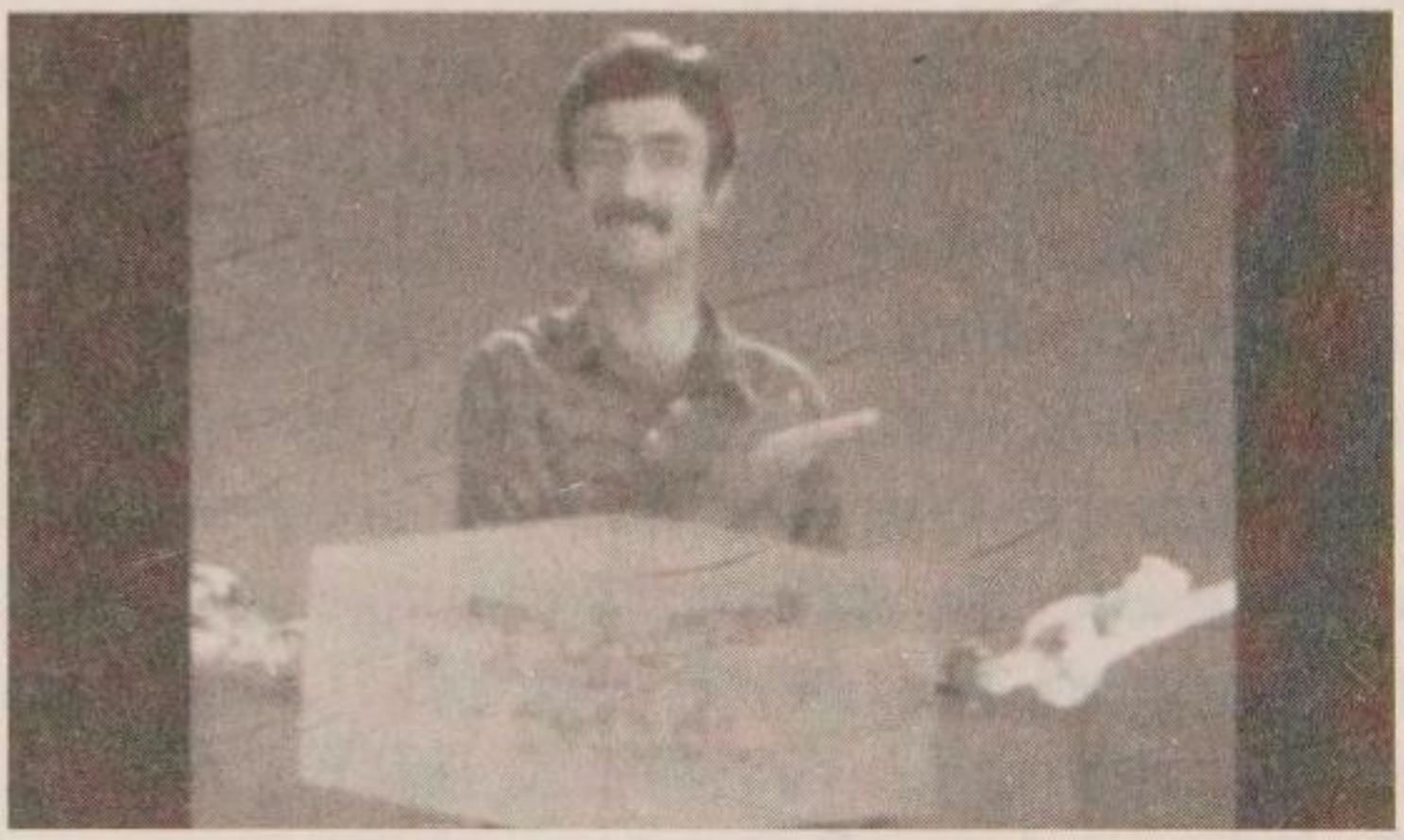
This is what Piyush shared, *'It was my first real campaign. When Luna was given to me, I had just entered into a semi-creative department.* ***Mani Iyer*** *and* ***Suresh Mallick*** *wanted us to take the lead and start doing Indian culture based advertising. Ads which are more Indian in their fabric. They also had an issue of how to get a client-servicing guy into the creative domain, without creating any stir. So they started a post called 'Copy Chief – Indian Language', thus in other words, I was supposed to get accounts which were all Indian based. With it, I got Luna, Fevicol and a little later, Asian Paints was added.*

When they gave me Luna, the ad that was being made was in English, wherein a close up of the machine was shown. But there was very little machine in it, the rest of it was cycle. Once I was given the account I wrote three ads and was scheduled to meet ***Arun Firodia*** *of Luna. He sat there with a toothpick in his mouth. I started to narrate the scripts with full enthusiasm and zest. I read the first one – No reaction, then the second one – after which he just flatly asked, "Aur bhi kuch hai?" I said "Ek minute" and I read the third one. I had a feeling it is all going to go waste, that he hasn't liked a single script. After listening to the third script, he removed the toothpick from his mouth and said "Teeno bana dijiye" and began laughing.'*

What was the inspiration behind one of the most famous slogans 'Chal meri Luna"?

'Chal meri Luna, as a line was inspired from the extremely common line we all have said in our childhood, "Chal mere ghode". Kids sit on the back of their dad and shout out loud, Chal mere ghode! Also additionally, I wanted the common man to feel that his Luna is like his identity. For instance, Maharana Pratap and Shivaji; both of their horses were a part of their being; they were nothing without their horses. Similarly, I wanted Luna to be a part of an identity. The ad was released in 1987. ***Dilip Ghosh*** *shot the film.'*

If I am not wrong, one of the films featured Raju Hirani?



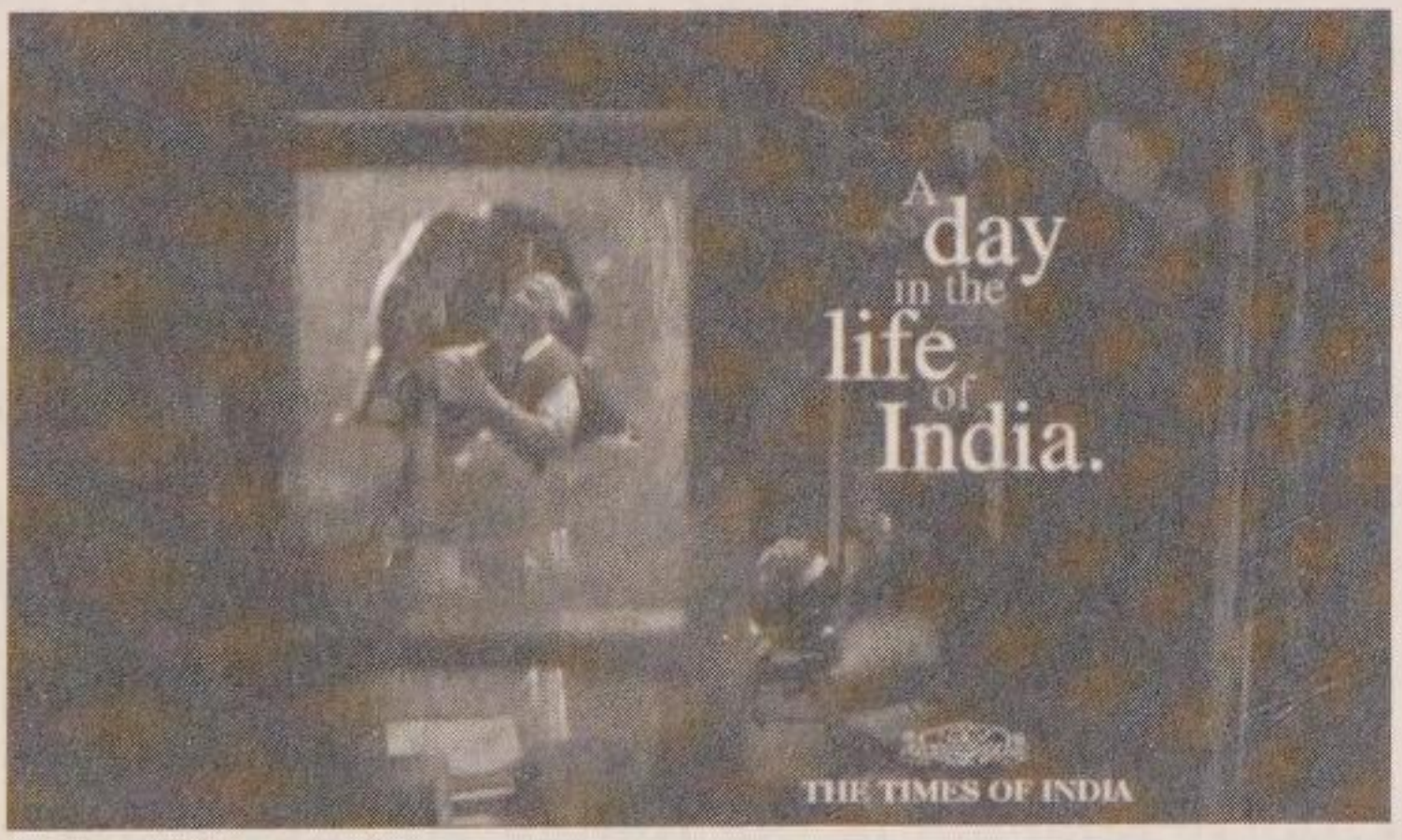
'Yes! Infact, whenever we didn't have money, we had Raju Hirani. He is a very good friend. I used to tell him, "Tu hi aaja, paise-waise nahin hai."'

On this nostalgic journey with Piyush, I realized that back then, the spreading popularity of television came with the realisation that people watch it for entertainment and not messages. We all loved what Ramanand Sagar's Ramayan taught us, because the medium was stories. Good moral stories are like homeopathic pills where the sugar coating is the entertainment and medicine is the moral. This enlightenment,

of short Panchatantra type moral stories, lead to powerful sixty second stories in advertising. In the space where emotions and human stories dominated ads, I am compelled to speak about this brilliant project, in which Agnello and I were involved. Agnello Dias communicated the importance of Times of India; the country's oldest newspaper by being a gripping storyteller.

'Pakya select ho gaya'

Times of India wanted to reiterate the paper's rich and long association with the country. With a brief like that, one could have fallen into dramatizing rich historic events but Agnello came up with a brilliant observation about newspapers. That they bring in good and bad news with the same emotions. True. Look at the classified columns, you will see an obituary ad next to one celebrating the birth of a child. These observations led Agnello to write a story of the same newspaper delivering good and bad news to the same family over time.



In his calm, composed demeanour Agnello shares the details that have gone behind making a story about a paper, one that holds many stories.

'Most times, I can only work if there is a problem … because the problem becomes my starting point. Times of India earlier

had a brilliant set of ads, that brought alive the theme, "A day in the life of India", which took a satirical look at the state of the nation, brought to us by The Times of India. Prasoon Pandey did the ads. But now, they wanted to take a serious stance and sink into a deep emotional connect. So a part of the brief was, "We want to connect emotionally and secondly, the newspaper should be present in the ad." As soon as I started thinking of this idea, the opening shot of the film was clear in my mind – a boy running into the town with the newspaper in his hand. Now, I had to weave a script from there; a story that would serve TOI's purpose. And it occurred to me while I was reading the newspaper one fine morning. I realized the irony of a newspaper was that in one tiny rectangular box, like a classified column, a dramatic contrast of emotions jostled for space; almost simultaneously. You have someone mourning over a loss and someone else, celebrating a birth at the same moment in time; in different parts of the country, all looking at the same page. No other medium has this unique power, not even television. It's a lot like what film-folk like to call the Chaplinesque Graph, after the genius of Charlie Chaplin, who got you laughing heartily over something funny, and then suddenly you noticed an overwhelming l truth at the same instance.

So I got the key insight about a newspaper's character, that is true for any newspaper, but when it comes to Times of India, I also have to highlight its ubiquitous presence in our lives. It is the only newspaper that can say "We have seen everything, everywhere in India for over 175 years". So, I had to also include the generation spread. Of course, I cannot show 175 years because no one lives that long, but I can surely show seventy years. And with these two anchors in mind, I wrote the story. A young boy is selected in the Indian Hockey team, with the news arrives in a TOI. The entire town rejoices and so does his family; everyone … but his grandfather reacts in joy! The grandfather gets emotional and goes into an unkempt store room, therein, he opens a trunk and from its debris, removes a well-kept old newspaper! It's a TOI dating fifty years back. We see the news related to him, when he was dropped from the Hockey camp. Then he looks at both the newspapers and does a little dance of joy!'

That film is intensely beautiful Agnello. Now tell me why, how such a local line 'Pakya select ho gaya'?

'Once I knew that a random boy will run into the town, carrying a newspaper, I knew he has to shout out something loudly … to hail the town folk. I have grown up in Parle and I had grown up with many friends who had nicknames. I just picked one which is a local name for Prakash which is Pakya. So the line, "Pakya select ho gaya!"'

What made you choose hockey over cricket? *'Honestly, I was just tired of cricket. Although there was talk around changing Pakya into a more conventional (read North-Indian) nickname like Babloo; a Punjabi name and also discussions on whether we should play safe and change hockey to cricket. But apart from being tired of cricket, I also had a very logical reason for choosing hockey.'*

And what was that?

'When you are a cricketer, even one who has been dropped from the Indian team … due to an injury, you are not forgotten as much, that no remembers you! You are remembered as a yester-year player. But with hockey, it is quite possible that no one in the vicinity would even remember your past, with the passage of time. So I wanted the grandfather to be lost in oblivion in the current world.'

So you convinced the client about Hockey. Any other changes that they insisted upon, which you stuck to and convinced them?

'They weren't against anything as such, but there was some minor discussion related to the ending. On both sides of the table, there was a minor talk about, whether it felt too sad or depressing - The grandfather getting nostalgic about his failing. I was of the opinion that it was in fact, a moment of triumph and celebration for him, because what he had lost, his grandson had achieved. It was like life coming a full circle for him. In any case, that was a majority view that prevailed.'

When you are to evoke emotions, it is a tough job, for you are required to strike the right chord with the audience and also keep the brands aim in your mind. How did you make this work?

'Detailing, lots of detailing, Pops. When you are to communicate so many layered emotions, a lot apart from words need to speak. Ours is a visual medium; what our audience sees, they should also be able to empathise with. Let me share some instances, which will give you an idea of the level of detailing we worked upon. Let us begin with the first shot, when the boy comes running into the town, with the paper., Now after a point in time, it is an act that runs the risk of getting boring. We are looking at a good amount of seconds. A boy or boys just shouting, "Pakya select ho gaya" and running. I felt, what was needed were visual relief breaks that could add to the drama. So while the boys are running and shouting, suddenly they reach the temple ... and they stop and hush into silence! That's because near and in the temple, while the prayers are going on, it is natural for anyone to become silent.

Then again, we introduced the brass band, which besides being a visual relief break in their journey, also allowed us a certain background-score to design the sound. In this manner, Abhinay and me, we made the graph even more interesting. We also had discussions over the grandfather's spectacles; whether its arm or the shoulder should be broken ... or its lens. One funny thing happened with the reading glass. After the ad was released, people started to ask how he read the second paper without his glasses ... is there is a flaw! It isn't and it's not like it slipped by ... in fact, there was no need for him to read the second paper; he already knew what it was about as he must have read it dozens of times ... fifty years ago, when he could see without glasses. It was etched in his memory. He knew the original headline says by heart! Yet another detail was the shot where we show the grandfather's toes curling!'

I believe it was to communicate his nervous response to the news?

'Yes! The shot wasn't actually the part of the original script. But when Abhinay and I were on our way for the shoot, I suggested we should add this one shot in the film. I wanted to

create drama and mystery through his non-verbal reaction. The reaction would confuse the audience, as to why he wasn't ecstatically happy, when everyone else was and this will help build my climax. The life reference for this instinctive nervous twitch comes from an incident, during my childhood. When I was a kid, I used to play football for my school. So the school bus used to take us to the ground and we had a bus driver, who attended all our matches. There was one thing about him that all of us boys found very quirky, due to which we used to make fun of him. He had this involuntary nervous twitch of the feet that came about, without him realizing it, whenever our team was about to score a goal ... it was this weird leg spasm like thing. So I picked up the idea from there.

What happens with this kind of detailing is that some cues are wonderfully understood by the audience and some may just not be noticed. For instance, in the last scene when he dances, we show the shot through a broken window. A window that has been apparently broken by a ball. The window was a metaphor for the grandfather, but it was probably broken by Pakya while playing hockey at home, as a child. And that broken window too, was something I was inspired from a real story that I had seen on television. Once, I was seeing a news channel, in which an old lady was being interviewed and she was showing the reporter a broken window and proudly telling him that this was broken by ***Sachin Tendulkar****, when he was a child. It is this kind of detailing that can make a film full of emotions and reality!'*

So Abhinay Deo directed the film? And where did you shoot it?

'Yes, it was shot by Abhinay. The location we chose was Pushkar in Rajasthan. We wanted a small town, one that did not look like Rajasthan or any part of India. Pushkar fitted the bill perfectly, since it does not have any of over-ethnic Rajasthani visuals. It looks like any other small town.'

So how was the experience while shooting?

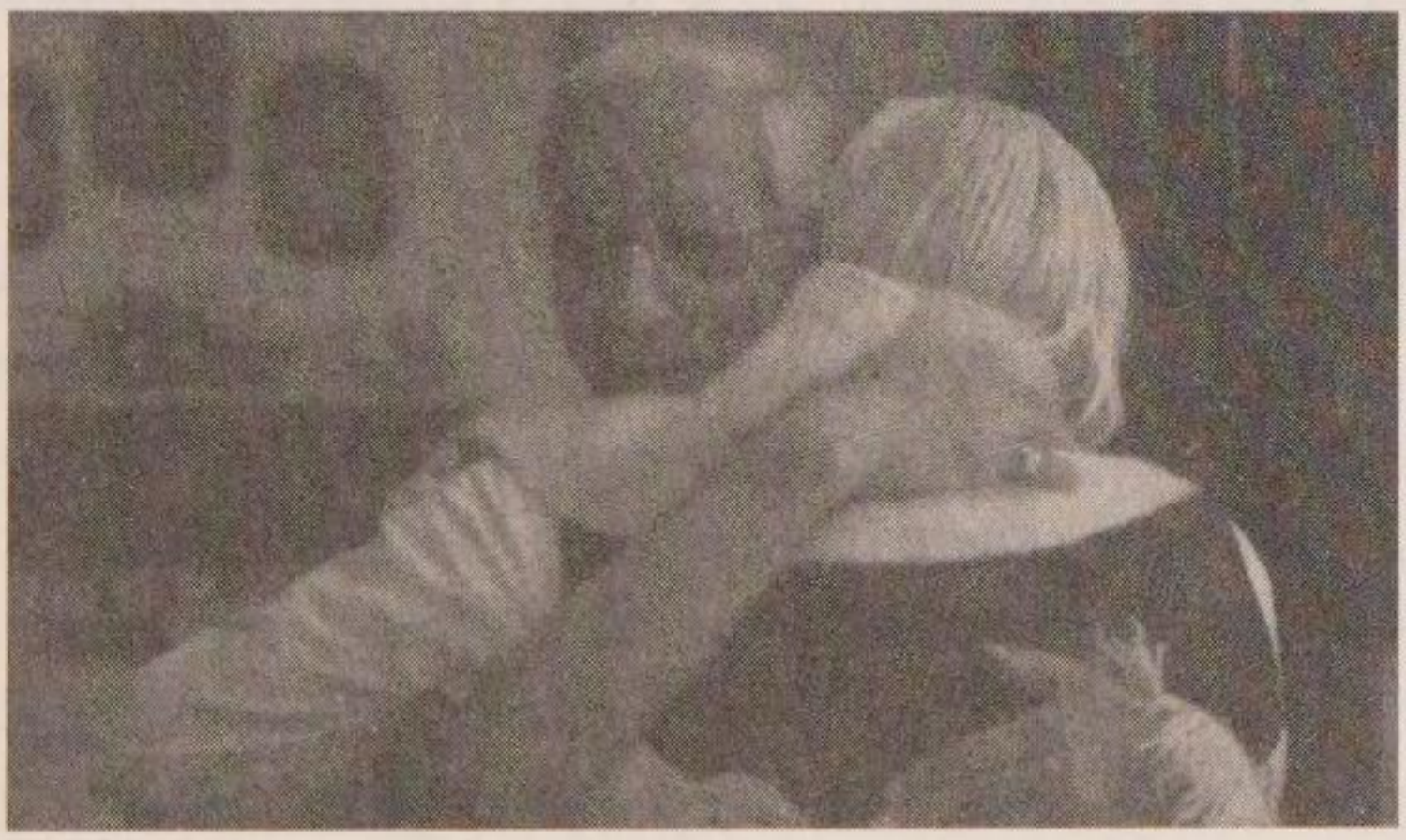
'It was adventurous! Pushkar is a quaint town, you cannot eat non-vegetarian food there. No alcohol is allowed and

shockingly, no footwear too, since it's a holy town. Not even slippers! How do we survive in the summers? Without footwear? In practically desert terrain? So we had to get innovative! Some of the production team members, they cut card-boards and tied strings onto them and we wore them as make-do slippers. ***Jason West****, our cinematographer who's of British origin was most appalled by this. The people are also equally peculiar. Abhinay and I, alongwith the production team and the brass-band were checking out a location, when suddenly a guy who could not walk came to us and began abusing Abhinay and me! He kept shouting, hurling all kinds of abuses at us. People came out to their windows to check what was happening. He went on for fifteen minutes and wasn't stopping. Obviously, we were taken aback. Then one of the production guys went up to him, said something and he stopped. "What did you tell him?" We were curious. To which, he replied, "I asked him ki paise denge to chup baithega kya?" (If we give you money, will you keep quiet?) And he agreed. So it was the guy's strategy to get money from us!'*

It does sound a bit insane and over-meticulous, when you hear an ad film maker, a creative guy obsessing over a minute detail - like the spectacles of an old man. Must it have a broken glass or a broken arm? But it is in this obsession that brilliance breathes. We as ad-makers want to weave life in every frame possible, so that when the audience sees our work, they feel it is their life playing on screen. What Agnello did was simple. He just understood that a product like a newspaper and a brand like Times of India, does much more than just bringing news to us! Why! it delivers emotions too. As soon as he saw it in the light of emotions, the product andthe brand became a reflection of our lives. The moment Times of India is shown as an intimate part of our life, the audience develops a greater affinity. A similar insight and road was traversed recently, where-in, a highly functional technology, "Google" had become a thread. A thread that pulled together, two age-old friends, separated due to partition. **Amit Sharma;** the director of Google Reunion shared the nuances of the excellence he created.

An Unforgettable Union

One thing about these ads that connect is its casting. It is the characters we see on screen that make us feel what we feel. When we see Pakya's grandfather or the Fortune Oil's adamant dadi or the dancing girl of Cadbury, we immediately relate them to a real person in our lives. And as I begin to talk with **Amit Sharma** of Chrome Pictures, in his office about Google Reunion; an ad with two generations, modern technology, a story of two childhood friends who were separated due to partition, a granddaughter who uses the technology to reunite them, a reunion that makes you melt! What you love about the ad along with its narrative, is the two friends and thus, I start by asking as to how does he manage to get his casting so right?



'Pops! The key is to cast from life! Casting is the biggest aspect in any kind of film-making, be it ads or feature films. When you are seeing something on television and you can relate to it, and put yourself into it ... I think a filmmaker's work is done – atleast 50 per cent. For instance, you are watching an ad about one guy who looks like your "padosi", and you say "Arey! yeh to Guptaji jaisa lag raha hai", the impact is achieved. I have been born and brought up in a joint family

and have seen many characters, plus the additional crowd of galli-mohalla. So you meet many characters when you are growing up.

Although Pops! I don't read much; I notice, observe and gather a lot of things from my environment. The way people talk, behave and react. Some of the best places to learn about people, are the railway stations, the airports and on the road. Sometimes, it has so happened that at an airport people feel, I am staring at them. At these places, you find all kinds of emotions. And it is from these observations, that I get my characters who I cast in my ads.'

So tell me about some real life people whom you have transformed into characters of your ads?

'Like the two old men of Google Reunion. Both the characters are inspired from my real life experiences. For instance, my father's mamaji. He is still alive. As a kid, I used to feel that he is like Amrish Puri. I used to be very scared of him and then one day, I decided to fight the feur and stood in front of him. Then I confidently said, "Haan bolo". So he replied in pure Punjabi, "Ae tu ena sa hega, tu kaise baat kar raha hai!" (You are so small and look at the way you are talking).

Thus the Pakistani uncle in Google reunion is like my mamaji. The way he looks, his eyes ... he is quite intimidating. The Pakistani uncle, even in real life, when you speak to him, he will not look at you. He will keep looking down and then suddenly, he will look at you and give you a blank look. All the time, you keep wondering whether he is getting you or not. And then, when I was shooting, I told him, "Uncle, give me that look, which you gave me when we met for the first time". So when the camera was rolling and we took his first shot, he gave that look. All I did was to add a bit of glycerine in his eyes, to get that slight far-away, sad look.'

Who was he?

'He actually is a renowned guy. He has done theatre, directed feature films and all.'

Tell us more about the Google Reunion ad and some behind the scenes of it? Who was the man who played the Indian uncle?

'The uncle who played the Indian friend is a Punjabi. He resembles and is like my friend ***Prashant Kale's*** *father,* ***Vijay Prakash Kale****. Prashant's father talks in this typical Punjabi tone, a heavy voice, "Woh to kardenge, usmein kya hai", "Woh to ho jaayega"! And one thing that I picked up from my friend's father is, the way he walks. So the Indian uncle, the way he walks to open the door, is the way Vijay uncle walks and he has this habit of saying, "Haan ji". That is the same thing the Indian uncle says, when he opens the door to his friend.'*

So they were professional actors. How was the experience of working with them?

'Yes! Both are theatre artists and have been a part of the industry for long. Working with them was nothing but fun! Pops! In real life they are very funny and mischievous people. We were shooting the scene of them meeting after so many years, it was a serious emotional scene, but behind the scenes the reality was completely different. I was at the monitor, looking at both of them and I was laughing uncontrollably. And why? Because, these two characters know each other for a very long in real life, it is true that in old-age, man becomes like a kid; their egos go somewhere else!

Now the thing was that the Indian uncle was acting really well and the Pakistani uncle was a bit low key, in comparison. The latter was aware of this, that how the Indian uncle is acting well and eating his shots too, because he has more dialogues, while the Pakistani uncle's work was more about his expressions. So this situation sparked a new chemistry. The Pakistani uncle started a mischief. What happened is, the Indian uncle had delivered his dialogue and now, it was the Pakistani uncle's chance to respond. But he just didn't say his dialogue. He was messing with the shot on purpose. I kept prompting him, "Uncle bolo! Uncle bolo!" This he did for three to four takes and due to this, the Indian uncle got irked and shouted, "Oye! Tu apni line kyun nahin bolta! Arey! Yeh apni liney nahin bol raha hai!"

(Hey! Why are you not saying your lines! Hey! He isn't saying his lines!) I could see that childishness in them.

So what the Pakistani uncle was attempting to do, was to frustrate the Indian uncle, "Woh soch rahe they ki jaise hi yeh low key jayega, mein apna dialogue shaan se bol dunga". But the other one was no less, he understood the prank and was double determined to perform better, with every take. Both of them shared a strange chemistry. Now the Pakistani uncle finally delivered his line, but by now, the Indian uncle was really irritated, and wanted to play a counter prank.

The next shot was, that finally the Pakistani uncle came and hugged him. I had instructed the Indian uncle, "Aap hug mat karna, aap aise hi khade rehna, because aapko abhi tak believe nahin ho paa raha ki yeh wohi Yusuf hai. Jaise hi woh gale milenge, aap unhein response mein gale mat lagana. Take three seconds and then hold him, and hold him tight", because according to me that is the emotion of the guy. The Pakistani uncle knew who has he come to meet, but it's a complete surprise for the Indian uncle. So, the shot is about extreme emotions, they were meant to cry. Now, when it was the time for the first take, the Pakistani uncle came and said, "Yaara!" and he hugged him. And the Indian uncle was standing there. Then, I gave him the cue, after a few seconds, "Uncle hug karo". He literally choked him with an extremely tight hug. And the Pakistani uncle was like, "Oye chodh mujhe, leave me!" He finally left him and the Pakistani uncle said, "Meri poori pith hila di hai isne! Kar kya raha hai!" And everyone on the sets, including me, knew that he was actually taking revenge, for the prank that was played on him. I was like, "Uncle!" and so, the Indian uncle said, "Haan! Malum hai thoda zyada ho gaya! Mein abhi theek se karta hoon! Aaja!" In response, the Pakistani uncle said, "Nahin! Pehle tu kisi aur ke saath karke dikha mujhko!"

Pops! Woh to lad rahe the, and I was enjoying every bit of it. There were times when in their little tiff, I wasn't getting my shots and then I used to approach them and say, "Uncle, kya hai nah, mujhe shots nahin mil rahe". So the Pakistani uncle would simply reply, "Haan!" and the Indian uncle who was bubbly, would come, walk with me and say, "Ab dekh tu … mein iski kaise bajata

hoon" and I was like "Nahin uncle! Bajao mat … aap sirf sahi shot do mujhko …" and he replied, "Haan! Wahi … Tu jaa, shot le." This is how the Google ad was made, wherein both the actors were actually teasing each other and taking each other's case. In the midst of all this, I was getting my brilliant shots. In the entire shoot of such an emotional film, I was just laughing.'

The shoot sounds like a party!

'It was amazing!'

So did you research on how Pakistani's look, or have you been to Pakistan?

'I haven't, but I know Pakistan … as if I have been there! The visuals are so clear in my mind … it is, as if I have visited the country. This is because of my grandparents … they came from Pakistan. My father was born in Delhi. In my childhood, I have heard a million stories about Pakistan. My grandmother used to tell me so many stories about Pakistan. For instance, about her best friend "Rajjo". So, that is where I picked up the name Rajjo for the Google reunion story. It appears in the longer version of the ad.

She had told me once, that when they were leaving from Pakistan, she had sixteen kgs of gold on her and had she carried it, people would have killed and looted them. So she had actually buried that gold, in her home's veranda, and had quietly gone and told Rajjo about it, so that at least she could use it. They had come from Jhelum. When you listen to such narratives, you tend to visualize the places. These stories of my childhood helped me a lot for the ad. When I was reading the script, all these visuals would play in front of my eyes.'

Where did you shoot?

'The entire ad was shot in Delhi. The house we have shown, which looks like a Pakistani house, is located in Purani Dilli. One shot, which is the wide shot of Lahore, we shot that in Pakistan. I wanted to take a wide shot of Delhi, but then it occurred to

me that if someone is watching the film in Lahore, they should know that this is Lahore! So we contacted somebody in Pakistan through ***Dasadook.*** *He is a photographer and he got the shot.'*

Any other anecdote? Anything that you will treasure with respect to this film?

'As such everything! But if I have to mention one ... it is this. One morning at about 7:45 AM, Piyush sir called me (Piyush Pandey). "Hello sir!" and he said on the phone, "Amit! So raha hai! Achha sun, can you send somebody to my house ... like right now!" To this, I replied, "Okay sir!" I sent my driver. With him, Piyush sir had sent me a tin-box and a letter. The tin box was from Fazal Sweets; Lahore. He had gone to Pakistan and on his trip there, he bought this for me and with it, was a letter where he appreciated my work for the Google reunion ad. I called him and thanked him! Obviously, I was overwhelmed. He told me on the phone that, "I had gone to Pakistan and the kind of reception I got there was amazing. And then, I actually went to Fazal sweets aur wahan pe unhone bola ke yeh sweets aap director ko zaroor dijiyega ... humari taraf se!" I still have the tin-box with me. It was full of "naan-khatais".'

That is a truly wonderful story Amit

Amit went and brought the letter that Piyush had written for him. It was neatly framed. As I read it, I realized how an ad proliferates beauty, when it is made with honest emotions and passion. The impact of emotions was so evident, that the owners of Fazal Sweets sent a token of love for Amit; a moment when India-Pakistan is forgotten, because it is about a story, a reality, an emotion that connects all.

I find it fascinating that a technology product can have such an emotional connect. Often technology products are sold by "feature bragging", but when the same technology is weaved into a tool, one that adds magic to our lives, we tend to remember and develop an affinity for the product, because of the way it made us feel. On seeing how Google got to age-old friends, who lived across the border, the joy we experienced is beyond

comprehension. I am sure, each one of us felt a penny drop, when we saw a little boy and his dog ... a little pug wandering around and Vodafone simply telling us,"Wherever you go, our network follows". Communicating their omnipresent network through a heart-warming, innocent relationship is a brilliant way of simplifying technology and infusing it into life. Prakash Varma, the Director of all Vodafone ads, shares how did the innocent story of the pug and the boy happened.

Weaving a beautiful world, for you and I

"Pops! Before I tell you about the entire journey I would like to mention that the Vodafone pug is one of my most special campaigns. I will never be able to forget working for this one. And this spectacle started with a call from ***Mahesh*** *and* ***Rajiv Rao*** *of O&M. It had almost been a year after I had started working and I got a call from them. They said, "Prakash, we want you to do this film for Vodafone!" I replied, "Fine! But what is the film about?". As a reply, I got a one liner, "It's a very simple film - about a boy and his dog. The boy is walking and the dog is following him. And then, we have the line "Wherever you go ... our network follows".*

Often in the advertising, you get long briefs and pages of scripts; here I was just dished out a one liner thought. I took

a few hours to understand where does the film lie, from the direction point of view and as I thought, I realized that what I was just offered, was brilliant. I called them back and said, "This is very good! I love the simplicity attached to it! it's powerful and effective. Let's crack this". I have been working with Mahesh and Rajiv for eleven years now, and have realized this is their style. What you get initially is a simple, straight-forward, non-cryptic thought and in a while, you realize the potential that idea holds.'

To convert a one-line idea into an ad film, which was almost about a minute long, how did you find your way through that?

'I was told it should be a sixty seconder, which means I couldn't simply convert the idea into a linear visual - a boy walking and a dog following. To make it an interesting ad, what we need is a structure, a story and a travel. In order to get that structure, I traversed back to my childhood days. During holidays every year, I would visit my grandfather's house in Kerala. Whenever we there, I had this routine I loved. I would just set out walking, all on my own and discover new places, explore the surroundings, find my own little secret spots. So I knew the kind of travel I was going to portray; the same kind that I had experienced, in my childhood. The next important thing for me was the imagery; I wanted it to be real. Ads usually portray larger than life, lifestyles, glamour, and stylish life cues. But somehow, I couldn't put the boy under a golden tree! I mean I wanted to keep it real. I wanted the entire story to be like a story any of us could have lived.

Once the imagery and its construction were clear in my mind, I moved on to scripting every aspect of the ad. In the script, we wrote how the kid gets up with the morning sun, sets out, roams around and then goes back home. Within this travel, we also scripted layers like the places he will go to, stop at, how the two will walk, how the boy will climb the wet stairs, cross roads, play football and so on. All this came together and we had a storyboard in place. It looked really great and positive on the paper. The challenge was - how do we do this? But somehow, a part of me was convinced that the ad isn't an impossible feat!'

Once the storyboard was ready, what did you go for next?

'It was all happening simultaneously now. For instance, the location. One option, which I had in my mind, was my grandfather's house in Kerala, which I knew would be a good location. But I resisted … because the moment you look at Kerala, you know it is Kerala. The place has such a strong character! I wanted my location to be unidentifiable and yet, beautiful. I wanted a neutral place, which would have a universal appeal so that anyone who was watching it … could relate to it. We then shortlisted some places in the North-East and finally it donned that Goa would be perfect! It has coconut trees, it has a scenic sense and yet, it isn't as overpowering as Kerala! Thus, our location was Goa! Along with the location, we started looking for the dog and the boy!'

Yes the epic Pug! Due to this ad the every other person wanted and had pug as pet. How did you think of the pug?

'Actually the Pug wasn't my first choice. When we were thinking of which dog to cast, we thought of many breeds. I wanted a simple looking dog … the one that hasn't been used in advertising before. I wanted a non-clichéd dog, who comes closer to a street dog. Fitting this choice was a Fox Terrier. It's like a street dog, has very expressive eyes and is small. So we found a guy in Delhi, who had a Fox Terrier. Often, when I have to shoot with kids or animals, I always like to keep a backup. Unfortunately or fortunately, we weren't able to find a back-up Fox Terrier. So as a backup, the only other breed I found a bit close to my requirement was a Pug. So, my second option was a Pug, it was a backup plan!'

Interesting! We will soon come to the instance that changed the Fox Terrier into Pug; before that tell me who was the boy?

'He was actually my neighbour's son; ***Jayram****. I had known him since he was born and had always liked him. His mother is an American and father, an Indian. Thus, he had this very memorable face, one you can never forget. He is a different*

looking kid and fitted my requirement well. I had thought of him at the last minute.'

Now tell me how did the Pug happen?

'Once everything was ready, we began with the shoot. The first shot I had planned to shoot was – there is a small dark tunnel, we see the boy coming out of it and in a fraction of a second, the dog is following him. We started at 7:00 in the morning. It was all set. I shouted out loud - Action and the boy began walking. However, the Fox Terrier refused to move an inch. I thought, probably it's the first take, so I continued. We took takes after takes but the dog wasn't just budging. The trainer tried a million tricks but the Fox Terrier stood there, just not co-operating!

Usually, when something isn't falling through at a shoot, you either get it right in an hour ... or decide to call it off. I went on till about 12:30 PM and I had shot nothing. I just didn't want to face Mahesh and Rajiv after this fiasco. Finally, I gave up on the Fox Terrier and decided to try out with the Pug; the backup plan. At 1:30 PM, we got the Pug out and decided to give it a try. Guess what! Even the Pug wouldn't move! I was flabbergasted at the turn of events. And to top it all ... the little boy Jayram, too, had lost his cool because he was walking since so many hours and he too got cranky. I just did not know what to do!'

Sounds like a nightmare, then what happened?

'Then I saw Mahesh and Rajiv walking towards me. My heart clinched; I was prepared to get an earful. And to my utter surprise ... what amazing human beings they are! They came to me and simply said, "Prakash, if you don't mind can we change the boy's T-shirt, since it has a blue patch on it and the clients may not approve of it, since it isn't the brand colour." That's all they said in an immensely request filled tone. I had no words. I just said, "Sure, we can change his T-Shirt". They didn't say a word related to the mess that was going on. Instead, they said, let's take a break to change the kids T-shirt. At that point, I told my production team to do something - anything they think will make this work.

Meanwhile I just went into my car and shut myself for two hours. At about 4:30 PM, some people were knocking at my car's window. I opened the door and saw a crew-member with a guy, who was running around with a Pug. When I saw this Pug, I realized she was more energetic than the one we had as a backup. The earlier one was pretty lazy. This one was running around frolicking, I felt a certain spark with this one.'

Oh! So this was a different Pug! Where did you find it?

'Yes! Her name was Chika, she belonged to a couple in Goa. My production team had found her that night. Post this commercial she became a star. She was on the cover of many magazines, she also acted in a Salman Khan film.'

So once you found Chika what happened next?

'I sprang into action and immediately called Jayram, the little boy and made him meet the Pug. I left the two alone and let them play for a while. Once they got a little pally, I went to Jayram and told him to start running, and saw the dog running behind him. I let this happen for about half an hour; Jayram ran, Chika ran - both stopped, played a bit and the loop continued. The chemistry was building up and it was 5:30 PM. I called my production team and ask them to set-up and start. Now I told Jayram to walk, but this time the Pug didn't follow, because she was busy doing her own little stuff.

I was losing time when an idea struck me. I gave Jayram a chocolate and told him to feed half of it to Chika and let the other half be with him, in his pocket. The kid followed my instruction and then, I decided to take my shot. I said action; Jayram walked. I was looking at the frame and somewhere midway, I see Chika walking behind. I got the perfect shot and it all started falling in place. I went crazy when I finally got my shot. But a lot was left! The next day, I was going to shoot the more complicated shots!'

So what happened the next day?

'We started early morning at about 7:00 AM. The first shot I took that day, was the only scene which wasn't scripted - it

was an improvisation. At the location, I had noticed a set of steps and I being a person, who loves simple shots decided to let Jayram climb the steps and let Chika follow him. It had rained a bit that day and the steps were wet. So Jayram climbed, followed by Chika, who accidently slipped due to the wet steps and immediately recovered. The natural unfolding of events gave me the best shots of my ad. That day was a lucky day! It was all falling in place … on its own. I had managed to get twenty different shots without any retakes; it was magical. I felt as if somewhere, some power was making this happen.

Finally it was time for the last shot, where the boy and the dog sleep on a bed. I wanted the dog to sleep on its back with her legs up but there is a catch here. On a normal bed, Chika just couldn't balance herself in that position. That's because she has this plump cylindrical body and a bed is soft. We kept trying for one and a half hours. But each time, she would tumble on either side. We had kept the camera rolling and were burning film after film. I just wanted a few seconds of her sleeping like that. At one instance, I put my hand on top of Chika and held her for some time, so that she gets the balance. The camera was rolling. Then, very slowly, I retracted my hands and when I took off my hands, she stay put for almost 3. 5 seconds. It was an exhilarating moment!'

One more magical ingredient of this ad is its track, so simple and hummable – *'You and I in this beautiful world…'*. Who did the track?

'The track was done by Roopak. This track was made in a record time of two and a half hours. Mahesh and ***Sneha Iype*** *wrote the lyrics. Some others contributed too. My brief for the lyrics was, "Keep it very simple. I want no over the top stories in the lyrics". And we got something as simple as, 'You and I in this beautiful world. Green grass! Blue Sky"!'*

What was the reaction you got once the ad was completed and shown?

'I will never forget the reaction I got at the presentation. After the film ended, everyone was clapping. While Piyush (Piyush

Pandey) just stood up, came to me, hugged me and kissed me. His moustache was all over my face. It is an unforgettable moment for me!' He laughed as he recounted.

All that hard work had to pay off. Let me now ask you about the sequel to 'You and I', the 'Happy to Help' ad. It is one of my favourite ads. I've cried looking at it and my wife and children keep making fun of me, saying how can you cry for a 30 second film? Every element of that ad is so good. The little girl, the dog and their relation. After 'You and I' people kept saying that you can't take the boy out of the ad. But you did and how! Tell us about 'Happy to Help' ... my readers will be very 'Happy to read' about it!

'Yet again, this germinated from a simple one line thought "Happy to Help". A line, which is enough for a passionate filmmaker to grab the opportunity. I was thrilled when Rajiv called me for 'Happy to Help'. By this time, Jayram had grown old and I always wanted the human protagonist to be a little kid. So we thought of casting a girl. Yet again, the girl in this ad isn't a typical kid. She looked different, owing to her mixed origins – her one parent was a South-African and the other was an Indian. She is a lovely kid!'

How was the experience shooting this one?

'By this time, I had done more films and I knew how to approach an ad like this. Unlike the earlier film, here I wanted the girl and the dog to interact. Thus, I knew we would require a very strong trainer and so we hired one. We shot this film in South-Africa. We had found this colony of small blocks and we shot the film there!'

It's amazing how a telecom company; a mobile phone network can be so innate to you in life. It is this tact of telling stories, which result in ads that have emotions at its core. While some touch our hearts quietly and make us cry, there are some ads that celebrate with us and then become a part of the popular culture. As we talk of touching human lives, one relationship that has forever defined us, as humans, is "friendship". We have all grown up, to have our own gang, our own confidante with whom we have shared secrets, memories

and life. Our ads have reflected this relationship beautifully, since time immemorial but with time, ads have also adopted to the ever-changing definitions of friendship.

Back in the yore, it was about fewer and forever friendships, but today, it is about many and the concept of friendship is beyond space and time. Even a "Like" makes you my friend. Today, friendship comes in many types, shapes and sizes. What changed this definition so drastically? It's the "youth and technology". Who knew friends could be of many types? Agnello Dias and Ram Madhvani defined this new-age definition and told us, in the most entertaining way that, "Har ek friend zaroori hota hai". Airtel's ad swept the world by its feet and friendships never remained the same!

Redefining Friendship

A classroom full of kids break into an impromptu song and what unfolds is the new age definition of "Friendship". Agnello Dias and Ram Madhvani tell us about the funda and fun that went behind Airtel's "Har ek friend zaroori hota hai".

The conversation starts with Agnello telling us about the genesis of this ad and how it all began. '*In advertising we do two things - we either usher in a change or tap an existing undercurrent of change; giving it a creative twist. For Airtel–"Har*

ek friend zaroori hota hai" we did the latter. The germ found its roots in a conversation, which I was having with the client; Airtel. We casually happened to speak about the concept of a 3:00 AM friend. I told them about a 3:00 AM friend - a person you can count on and call at any odd hour, when you are in trouble. So the first idea we zeroed onto, was that of a 3:00 AM friend. As the conversation progressed, I realized how the dynamics of friendship have changed today. In our times, when I was a kid, in our entire lifetime, we, at the most had five batches of friends – building friends, school friends, college friends, work friends and family friends. But today's youth has a humungous spread of friends, owing to the technology outburst. If they had to meet each of them physically, it would become impossible to have so many friends.

But, the virtual world has made it possible for you to have all kinds of friends, without even meeting them. And the variety is intriguing, you will have one 'crusader friend' who will keep sending you mails and requests and posts of 'saving stuff' – i. e. 'Save whales', 'Save democracy'. Then you will have someone who sends you just porn, some who just sends you ***Kishore Kumar*** *songs and each of these friends play a certain role in one's life ... the concept of acquaintances has blurred. In the absence of technology, such a paradigm shift wouldn't be possible. Based on these new dynamics of friendship, I coined the line, "Friendship mein har ek friend zaroori hota hai" but then I found it too long. So, I trimmed it -, "Har ek Friend zaroori hota hai".'*

How did the lyrics come about?

'I had written rough lyrics both; in Hindi and English and handed it to ***Amitabh Bhattacharya,*** *as a draft. It was like a road map. Based on the given lyrics, he came up with a line, "Dost to akhir dost hota hai". But for me, that line meant a different and deeper emotion, as it captures the quality of the relationship. However, I wanted to concentrate on the sheer quantity of friends that exist today. I also wanted something more light-hearted. Thus, I decided to keep the line, "Jaise chai ke liye toast hota hai, vaise har ek friend zaroori hota hai." We did not use the word*

"Dost" because it is very vernacular; no one uses it colloquially. As for lyrics like "Chuddy buddy, yaar buddy, kutte kamine" it was part of the original draft that we had written. So we had Amitabh polish it all and we got the lyrics ready.'

How did the lyrics render into such a beautiful track?

*'Ram Madhvani shared this **John Lennon** song – Give peace a chance, which had this very raw acoustic feel. We decided that we would give a similar treatment to our song. In fact, it was literally a part of the strategy presentation, which we made to Airtel. In it, we had mentioned that we shall use real sounds. Because, if the feeling is not of they actually singing it, then, it simply becomes a jingle. For it to pass as an impromptu act, real sounds became inevitable. We gave this brief to **Ram Sampath** who did the music.*

Once our treatment was decided, we made a list of things we can use as sounds - benches, tables, dustbin, dabba and much more. With this, we were able to make it sound like a picnic-like-song. It had a unique rawness and energy to it. As for the process on how we did it - We recorded the song, had the entire cast rehearse it, everybody had the song by-heart and then, we played it during the shoot! Ram Sampath would record them singing live and then, he merged it all to render a brilliant track.'

Were any of the "kind of friends"' you had in real life, inspired from real life?

*'The activist, crusading friend is actually inspired from a guy named **Vispy** (Vistasp Hodiwala) who was my colleague at JWT. He was this one person who would keep writing letters to authorities for varied causes. Also the friend, who is sent to pick up a parent at the Airport, is my own personal experience. I had once gone to pick up a friend's dad at the airport in an emergency. The placard read -"So and so's dad".'*

As Agnello told me about the germ and the insights behind the "friendly brilliance", I turned to Ram Madhvani to dig out the on-shoot stories. Ram was the director of this ad.

First, tell us how did Airtel 'har ek friend' come to you?

'It happened about two and a half, three years back. I was trying to figure out what next milestone to head to; as an individual and also, as a professional. And one thought became my anchor – I wanted to do work, wherein my on-screen characters should have a life before action and after cut. People in my ads should feel like they exist, before and after the ad too … not just during it. I aimed at making my characters more real and believable. I started doing so by undertaking actor workshops, where I would call a theatre guy from National School of Drama and conduct workshops, which would help me look at things not just as a shot but as a scene.

I began weaving in backstories; history beyond the frame. Now the question was, how do I make this happen? So I just sent out this message, "Guys I am becoming human" to my close friends like Balki, Agnello and couple of more guys. Agnello caught me and shared "Airtel – Har ek friend zaroori". A montage film with a song … as soon as I was dished the idea, my mind started churning.'

What did you do next?

'A couple of things went on simultaneously. We discussed the end of the ad, casting. Let me tell you about the end first. One end that was scripted was that a girl clicks a selfie, with the entire gang behind her and sends it to a friend, who is somewhere in a secluded camping ground outside a tent. This showed how Airtel connects. It was a very romantic end, which is how Airtel has been as a brand. But somewhere, I felt a different end was possible … which I borrowed from my own life.

When I was in tenth standard, my entire class was at the assembly hall and I suddenly barged in and shouted, "Hey! The principal is coming". Everyone was scared, only to realize that it was prankpost! For this, I had gotten a good friendly bashing. Thus, I suggested this as the end. Yes! It was a bit boisterous … but it sounded fun and real. We shot with both ends and then showed it to the client. After seeing it, ***Sunil Mittal*** *observed - for the boy camping alone at a tent and receiving the picture as "Too Airtel" and thus, we went for the boisterous end. It takes courage for the client to choose a different route because such is reality.'*

And then came casting?

'Yes! The entire casting was done from Mumbai. We had selected seventy kids. The age group was between eighteen to twenty-one years. Abhimanyu Rai is the guy who gets all the credit for the casting. He is the one I always turn to. He must have screened a 1000 kids, of which, I went to a hundred and we finally selected seventy. Once we selected the kids, I got them together three days before the shoot; not to rehearse the scene but just allow them to foster a bond. So we did a bit of exercises. I let them be and by the end of the day, they all knew each other. They were exchanging numbers. The ice was broken! Now, if one had to put his/her hand on another's shoulder, there wouldn't be any hesitance or awkward moments.

Once they were comfortable, I just created this mood and energy and got them singing. So, it all culminated to look extremely real. Together, it all translated into an enjoyable ad, because what people reacted to, wasn't just the idea but also the energy. When you look at those kids on-screen, as an audience you will feel they exist in your life too ... and you would start relating it to your friends.'

What all had you borrowed from your own life and your kids?

'A lot of it! For instance, in the ad, there is a scene where two girls are wearing the same T-shirt and they connect. Such an incident happened to one of my close friend's daughter. In fact, I had had my kids, friend's kids, assistants all share real life situations to weave into the ad. Prasoon had made a very perceptive comment after seeing this ad. He had told me, "Both Agnello and you now have kids ... who are in that age and it is quite evident from this ad!"'

Any on-the-shoots incidences?

'Just one and that of utter chaos. We had shot at Sophia's College, since I wanted a classroom with steps, so that everyone was well captured in the frame. We had got the permission to shoot at Sophia's up till eight. Unfortunately, it was raining

profusely in Mumbai that day. The lights reached the venue by six, as the tempo they were in got stuck in a traffic jam! Apparently, there had been a bit of flooding. It took an hour to set up the lights. All that I was left with was an hour to shoot. It was an utterly chaotic situation, we begged the Principal of Sophia's to give us some extra time and somehow, we finished the shoot. I reached home all drained out … and just sat in an armchair and zoned out for two hours at a stretch. I did not eat, talk or drink anything. I just sat there like a zombie.'

The song and the spirit both caught the audiences and it became a raving success. So much so, that Agnello told me that the Election Commissioner called him that year, as it was the election year and requested if they could adopt the song to propagate voting. And Agnello re-made the song to make it the election commission's anthem, "Har ek vote zaroori hota hai" and they played it during their promotions. This was one of the most unique compliments for the ad. It also led to an equally loved sequel, "Jo tera hai woh mera hai". Agnello just gave a preview of the same.

'As a continuation of "Har ek friend", we did "Jo tera hai woh mera hai". The genesis of this sequel was how extensively we share our lives with our friends today. In yester-years all we would know about our friends was, where they stay and who the parents are. But today, we know that "Someone's phupha (uncle) fell from the stairs and broke his leg".'

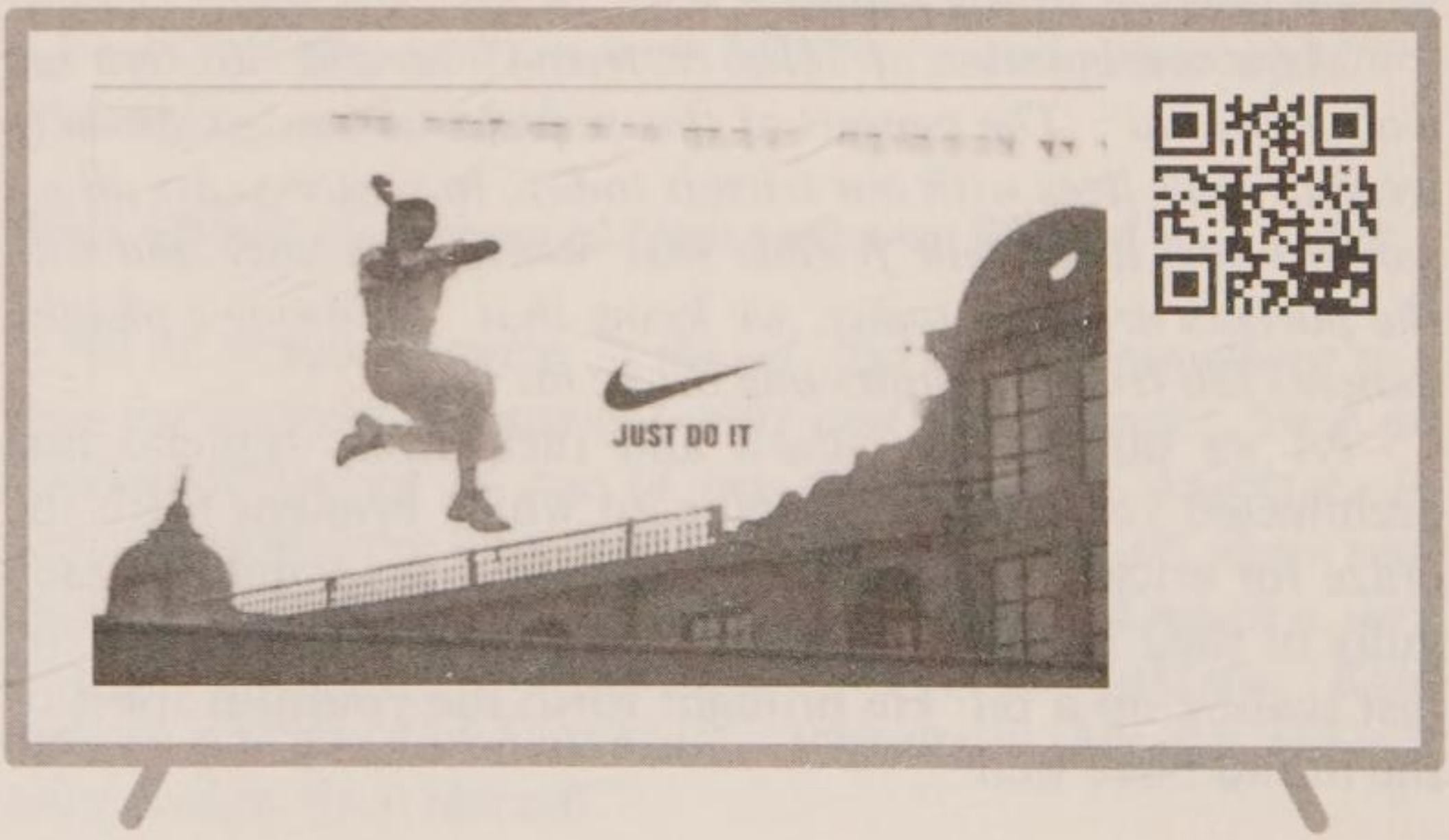
As we talk of the youth and their lives, Agnello had architected yet another amazing ad which brought forth the craze for cricket in our country and how our youth fill each gully of their locality, with a gripping match. This he did, by just scaling up a bit. He brought forth the youthful spirit of the brand Nike well!

Just Did It

Young, brash boys playing cricket … as a scene is quite common for us Indians. But what if the match was unfolding on trucks and manifested across buildings and balconies?. To portray the larger sportsman spirit of a game like Cricket

and a brand like Nike, Agnello Dias along with Abhinay Deo created an ad that had a peculiar and unique feel to it.

'Nike back then was running a global campaign for Football. It was called – "Jogabonito" which means "a beautiful game" in Portuguese. The campaign was rolled out with an intention - to clear up the rough image, football as a game had managed to earn for itself. It wasn't being viewed as a sport but more of a fight; a brawl. Many good footballers' careers were ending owing to the undue injuries they had, while playing. Thus, a campaign which showed how artful and graceful the game was! But as for cricket, the opposite is true. We view it as a gentleman's game. But this image has changed ever since the game is being played in the Indian sub-continent. Owing to the odds and space constraints that exist in our country, it has become a tougher and rougher game. I wanted to bring this aspect of Cricket at the fore-front. Most of the ads we see of cricket, either have the star players' casted or cute kids. Nobody had casted the sixteen or the seventeen year old boys.



So, I decided to explore this angle and marry it with the simple formula that Nike had adopted worldwide! That of taking simple childhood games and escalate it in scale. And, I wrote a script where seventeen-year-old boys are playing cricket but not in the gully, they are playing it across terraces. I thought of this first because I used to play cricket on a terrace. Unfortunately, the

safety aspect became a hurdle and I changed it to an eight feet level, the level of a traffic jam. The canvas looks very different from a ninefeet level, as it is somewhere in the middle. Once the idea was coined, I scripted all the situations. Each scene was written in detail - the man on the balcony cutting his nose hair, the ball surprising him, the girls getting embarrassed when the ball hits them. I further sat with Abhinay and wrote more situations like … how will the boy start!'

Why did you not think of the cricket stars?

'The reason was both choice and compulsion. At first, this ad was going to be shot by all the Indian cricket team's star players. But due to some technicalities in endorsement, no one turned up and we had to cancel the shoot, post which we decided to shoot with juniors; under nineteen cricket players.'

But the ad also had Zaheer Khan and Sreesanth in it?

'Yes! Back then, both the players were on the official roster of Nike, as a brand. So, we had to involve them. I wrote the end scene, as a bus being stuck in the traffic jam and from it, ***Zaheer*** *and* ***Sreesanth*** *come out, clad in the Indian team T-shirt with Nike's logo on it.'*

Where was this shot? Was it a real situation - the jam?

'We had shot the ad at ND Studio in Karjat. We had constructed the jam and chaos by design. In fact, in the script we had assumed a right-hand batsman and decided the traversing of the ball accordingly. But on the sets, we realized that the guy who was supposed to bat is a lefty. So we changed some arrangements on the spot and added a cinema bill-board at the left side, to fill the empty space and decided the ball would hit the bill-board. We had to change all the dimensions. Abhinay did the entire art direction and it took us almost two to three days to shoot.

We shot with some junior under nineteen cricketers and actors. At the same time, when we were shooting this ad, Bigg Boss's bungalow was in the same premises. I guess, it was Season 1. After finishing the shoot, when I used to come home and watch

Bigg Boss. In the background, I could hear the sounds coming from our megaphone, "Action", "Cut", and all. We had used an elephant in the ad, which was later taken by the Bigg Boss production team and he was sent inside the house.'

Apart from the unique idea of escalating a sport to a bigger level, what is also wacky about this ad is its background track. What is it?

'Abhinay and I were having a Vada-pav near Kirti College, when I made him hear this song in my car. It is an old "Goan song". He really liked it and we decided to use it in the ad. We had also recorded a Latin song as a backup, but it did not have the same energy levels. Hence, we chose the Goan song. However, we have to re-work on it due to its wordings. The original song's wordings were really weird and outrageous. They go like – "Come my wife come, first you give me liquor to drink. If you don't give me liquor ... I will break your head". We weren't willing to take the risk to run it as it is, so we changed the lyrics to, "Wait my friend wait, first you let me play. If you don't let me play I will keep chasing you all day. What kind of game?"

Once we re-wrote the lyrics, we had Ram Sampath work on its music track and we had a girl called ***Ella*** *from Chembur record the song in 'Ram Sampath's studio'. Initially, the song got rejected by the clients because the global team thought it was a Latin American song and not Indian. They insisted we use something Indian since it is an ad for India. We then sent them a Wiki page, proving that it is an old Goan language of India and finally it got approved.'*

Agnello was a bit worried since it was an unusual ad that portrayed the usual youth and cricket, but the peculiarity worked - the clients liked the ad and it went live with the longer edit.

These were the ads that reached our heart's intimate corners and gave a reel life frame to our real lives. Some took us back to joyful memories, some celebrated relations and some cherished love. In between these intimate doses

of entertainment, we also have had ads that have not just touched our hearts but also, expanded our minds. Ads that got us thinking, that provoked a sense of socialism in us. Ads that were weaved around a greater common good - a story which was painted on a larger social canvas and ads that evoked a spirit of unity, responsibility and diluted societal diversities. As I explore the element of a human connect in ads, I walk down the lane where these ads delve. In this lane, we have ads and ad-makers, who sensed the undercurrent of the society and presented a thirty second story, around those sensitive issues. And their impact, needless to say, was a revolution in itself.

Entertainment for a cause

When the leaders communicated, 'I' became 'We' and thus, history was made. Today, as we rejoice in being a democratic nation, where 'I' is quintessential, there are anchors that provoke us to become 'We', when needed. Advertising, I feel, is one of those anchors ... in an entertaining way, we dissolve the 'I' and awaken the 'We'. Brands have often rendered their values to a cause, in order to tell the world that they are beyond just being a product, and so is their audience. I begin the, 'entertainment for a cause' hall of fame with three brilliant campaigns of Agnello; his creativity for Times of India, reached India, literally! .

To Reach India

For a country where Politics has its own share of problems, Times of India remains to be the oldest and one of the leading newspaper brands sought to cull the leaders from the country itself. It wanted the people to take charge of their nation and thus, the initiative 'Lead India' was formed. The first communication carved out for 'Lead India' was a Press Ad, which manifested into a television campaign of unbelievable impact. Agnello tells us how.

'The story behind how the "Lead India" campaign happened was rather interesting. I had simply written a Press ad for Lead India. It all happened when ***Amitabh Bachchan*** *read the Press ad material. Someone from Times of India had visited him to interview him. As the talk unfolded, the interviewer informed Amitabh Bachchan about the plans they had for the 60th Independence Day of India. Hence, the "Lead India" initiative was shared and Amitabh was given the press ad. As soon as he read the press ad, his reaction was "I want to narrate this on television". And thus, a magnetic personality, his baritone voice, a straight-forward press ad, a black & white frame, the iconic Worli Sea Link bridge came together ... and the first "Lead India" ad happened!'*

So you are saying there were no plans to have a television ad made?

'Yes! It was all a sudden development! Thus, we didn't even have a director to shoot the ad in place!'

How was it achieved then?

'Back then, Amitabh Bachchan was shooting with Soojit Sarcar. *So Bachchan ji got him involved for this campaign. Soojit and*

I met and began our discussions. We just had two days in hand, to get the ad ready. The big question was what do we do? I had one idea in mind, in terms of the location. I felt that the Worli-Sea link would be ideal for an idea of this stature. As for Soojit, he had in mind a black and white ad. We combined the two, went through a crazy time, availing permission to shoot on the Sea link. For me, it was extremely difficult to accept what was happening, because I felt it would be a disaster. I tried to convince TOI to let me write a fresh script for the ad, because for me, rendering a press ad into a TV ad was just unreal. But to my surprise, it all turned out perfect. He read it with such emotions and poise that the format became a phenomena. Post this ad, we had celebrities pouring in communicating their willingness be a part of Lead India. The response was so overwhelming that I had stopped taking calls of celebrity secretaries because I had no scripts. It had become so prestigious to be associated with the campaign.'

So did anything peculiar happen during the Lead India campaign?

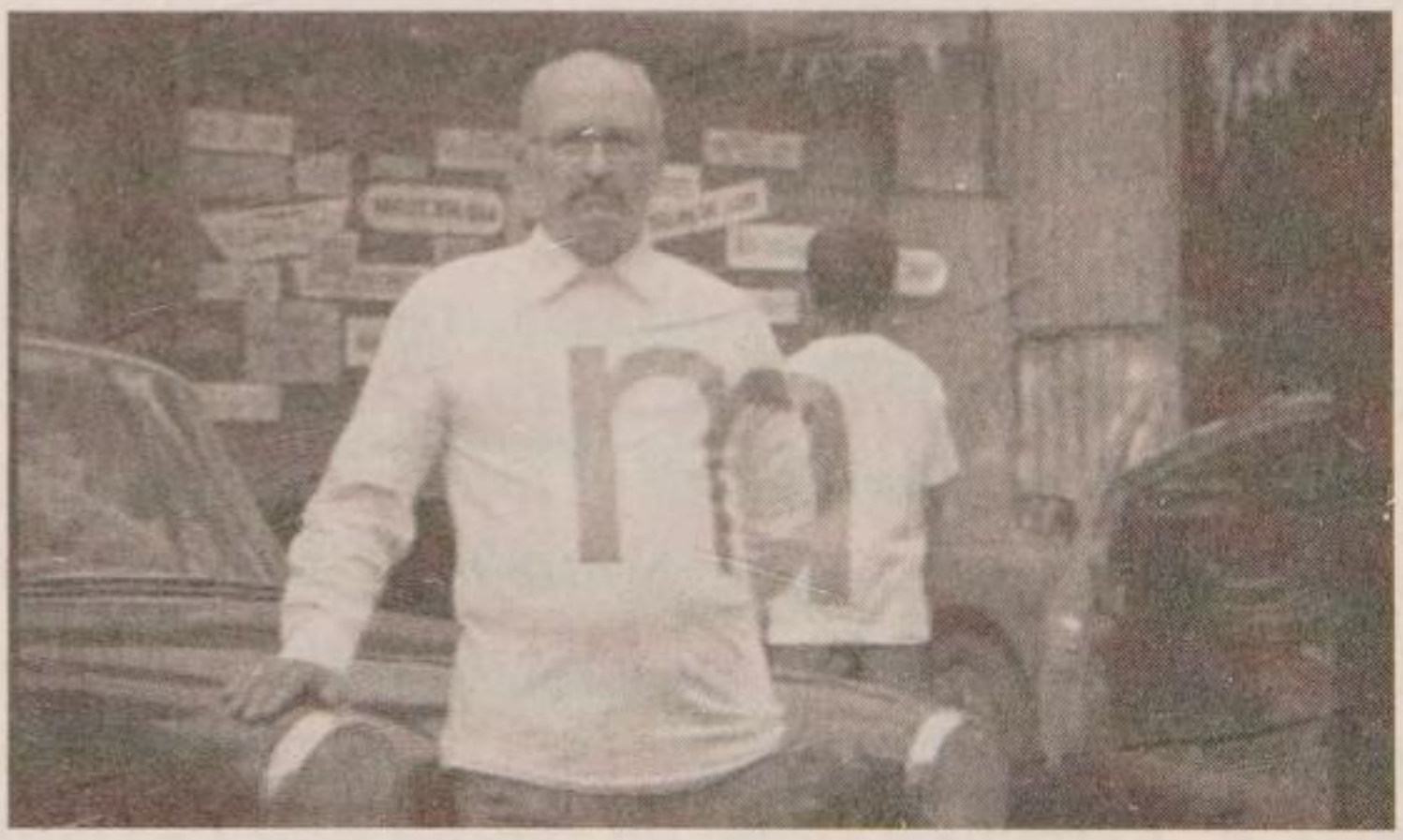
'Very much! One of the ads we shot, was without a director. We were scheduled to shoot with ***Priyanka Chopra*** *for "Lead India". At the nick of time, Soojit called and said, "Mein nahi aa sakta!" and I was out of words. Somehow, I mustered up a reply and said, "Nahin aa sakta ka kya matlab! Tu director hai!" But he had something unavoidable that had come up and he just couldn't make it. Priyanka came on the set and I explained her the situation. She simply said, "It's OK!" She then narrated her part and left. , We shot that ad without a director!'*

Lead India sought to strengthen the pillar of leadership and politics of the nation. But this was simply the beginning. Times of India ventured into yet another mission, that of 'education'. Teach India was conceived with the thought of culling each responsible citizen of India to come forth and teach and thus, take the nation forth. Yet again, to introduce this concept into the universe, Agnello created an ad and dropped like a penny in our chaotic minds. Suddenly, for a moment, a thoughtful silence took over and made us realize the power we possess;

a power that can help change the face of the nation. The ad portrayed a simple analogy how, two halves make one.

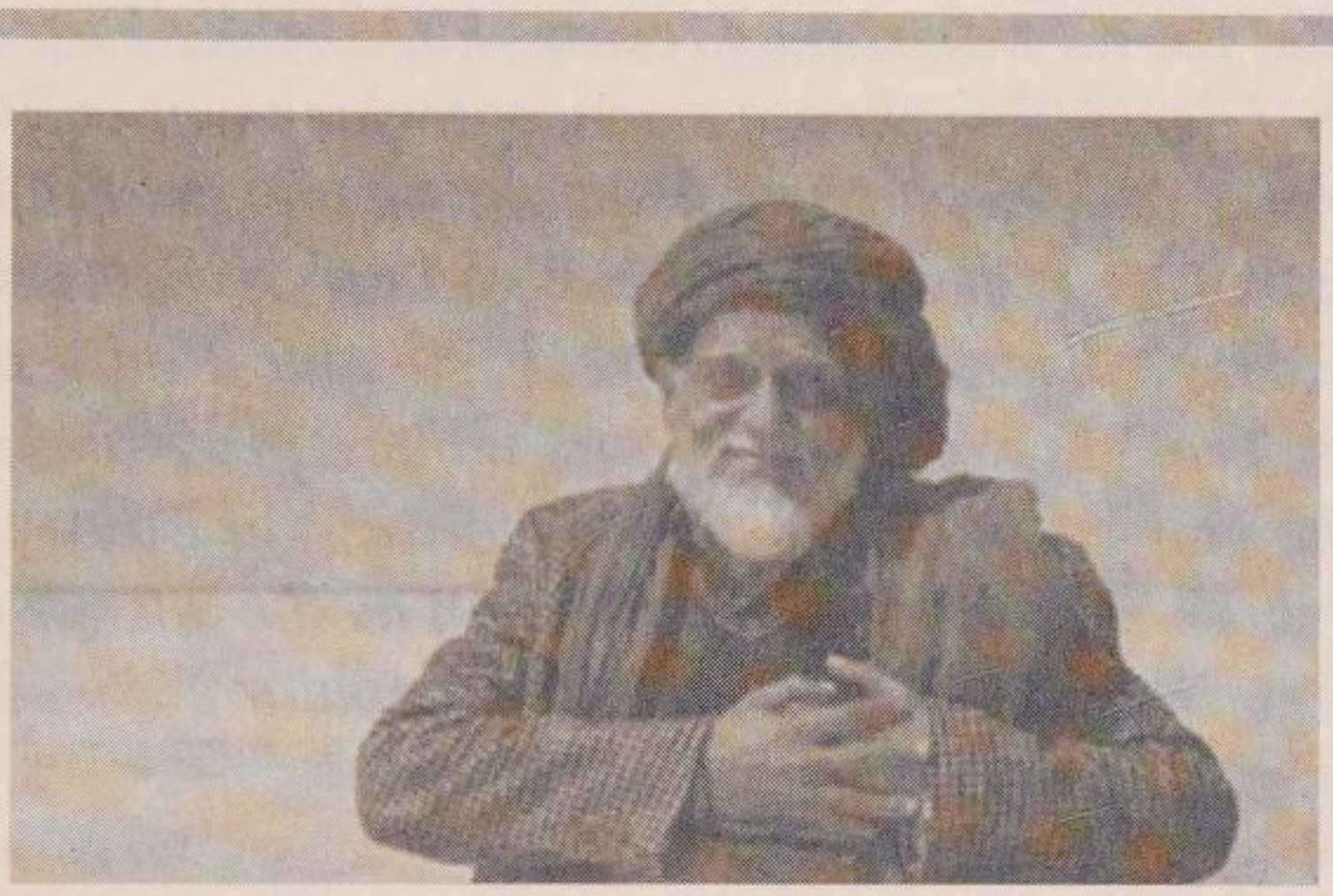
Agnello tell us about the Teach India ad?

'Teach India as an ad, is one which I enjoyed doing even more. I It was born through design and not chance. My task was to communicate the same clichéd message, "Come and teach" in a unique and interesting way. So first, I began fishing my mind for a line that encompasses the spirit of Teach India and I got hooked on to, "Let's learn to teach". Now, I had to build a script around this line of thought. This is when I realized how fragmented we are, as a nation! We have an India which is fortunate to have been educated and an India which still lives in the darkness of illiteracy; what if these two halves meet? I believe it will complete both!



Thus, the idea of white T-shits, with each having half a letter printed on it in blue, came up. These were with representatives of both India. Random real-life people. Suddenly, in the ad both the halves find each other and the letter is completed and so are the people. The visuals were backed by a score -"Aadhe aadhe ho, poore bano saare! Dhoondo apna aadha hissa aur badho saare!" I also designed the logo of "Teach India", the "A" written with a chalk.'

Agnello, even I loved both "Lead" and "Teach India" but what touched my heart the most, was the thought that you weaved for the campaign "Aman ki Asha" again an initiative by TOI. Dumb-charades being played across the border to get a song request on radio - it's such an amazing idea! How did this campaign shape up?



'The campaign was released on 1 January 2010. Aman ki Asha was a joint Indo-Pak initiative where Times of India and The Jang Group in Pakistan collaborated. It germinated with hope and is aimed at strengthening the ties between India and Pakistan, on a people-to-people basis. Our job was to for once, remove the over-rated hatred straining the relations between the two nations and bring forth, that the masses on both sides want peace. There are people out there, who share likes, love and have a chord of friendship. Why not try that route. With this message, we began our train of thoughts. After much brainstorming, we hit the idea. Shot in an arid landscape, close to Jaipur, it shows people across both sides of the border, in a game of dumb-charades.

A representative from Pakistan is standing close to the border and making gestures that describe the name of a film, while his counterparts in India are seen interpreting his signs through a binocular. In no time, the Indians manage to guess the name of the popular film. Thrilled, they spread the word that All

India Radio be called up and the song request from the film be played on air. A jubilant dance follows, across both sides of the border as soon as that song goes on air.'

Indeed a beautiful idea, why the DDLJ song and why radio?

'When I was making this ad, I was sensitive to the fact that apart from India, the ad will also be released in Middle East and Pakistan. Thus, I decided to choose a concept which was cultural and contemporary ... instead of it being cultural and traditional. When I was thinking of identifying a bridge that connects both the countries in light-hearted way, I realized that Radio as a medium travels across borders. It also airs request programs and further, both the nations share the love for music and Bollywood songs. Thus, I chose a Radio request program as the anchor and Dumb-charades as the connector, since it's a popular game. This combination offers an entirely unique chemistry.'

The cast was very authentic, tell me from where did you fish the characters?

'We had selected actors from Delhi and Kashmir. The old men from Kashmir were very peculiar and naïve guys. It was the first time in their lives that they had sat in an airplane. I remember an incident that reflects their naivety. Being old, they had walking sticks as their aid. Someone at the airport might have told them that the tags, which the security guys attach to their sticks should remain intact, else they won't be able to take back their sticks. They were so paranoid that they did not remove the tag at all for their entire stay. The Pakistani protagonist was an actor from Delhi.'

Share some interesting facts about this campaign?

'It is a campaign that truly reflects the 'Aman ki Asha' spirit, not just in its message but also in its make. The campaign has contributors from both side of the country, the 'Aman ki Asha' logo is designed by a Pakistani individual, the lyrics of the background score were written by ***Gulzar*** *who came to India during*

partition, the song is composed by ***Shankar Mahadevan*** *and both;* ***Rahat Fateh Ali Khan*** *and he has sung it! Such was the blend!'*

I had come across many Pakistanis who loved the ad and wanted to know its makers. Who was the director?

*'****Vinil Mathew*** *directed the ad and* ***Swadha Kulkarni*** *of Footcandles Films was the producer.'*

Did you receive any compliments, which you hold close to your heart, with respect to this campaign?

'Loads of them! But the one that I feel most honoured about, is this - Every year the British House of Commonwealth conducts a Commendation of good things happening in this world at the Parliament. "Aman Ki Asha" as a campaign, featured in the list of that years Commendation. The British House of Common Wealth had sent me a minutes-of-the-meeting as a symbol of appreciation.'

It's a proud moment when an ad is given the honour of being a change catalyst. As I talk of the varied initiatives by Times of India and their ads, I cannot miss mentioning an ad campaign that ran before TOI Pakya. It talked about 'A day in the life of India' - it was an ad done by Prasoon Pandey, which had satire at its best! When Prasoon talked about all his humour filled ads, he also mentioned the social sarcasm he packed in this one.

'Times of India has been one of the most satisfying works for me. "A day in the life of India" has a very interesting backstory. ***Mohammed Khan;*** *founder of Enterprise Advertising had conceived the line "A day in the life of India" and then, the TOI team approached me with a brief to shoot the real India. For instance, black ticketing outside cinema halls … realism of that stature. I replied. "Yeh to nahin ho sakta … kyunki ek aadmi kitna ghoomega reality collect karne ke liye. Aur agar mein ise create karunga, to uski poori reality chali jayegi". But they kept insisting on this concept and so I gave them an idea. I said, "Let us spend all the budget that we have in buying loads of video cameras … and I will do my work for free. You then distribute these cameras*

amongst the employees of the agency and TOI also. Tell them that whenever they are travelling, to & fro from home and office and they see something interesting, they should shoot it.

Out of so many footages, we will get something good which I shall edit. I was truly passionate about this idea. The TOI team heard my idea, went back and narrated the same to ***Pradeep Guha;*** *Marketing Head; Times of India. He simply replied "Prasoon is trying to outsmart you all. This is his nasty way of saying no". Pradeep immediately called me and said, "Prasoon yaar! Don't beat around the bush! Say no if you don't like our idea and instead, tell us what do you want to do?" I replied, "OK! I will think of something and come back to you."'*

What happened next?

'I got thinking! I am a huge fan of ***RK Laxman.*** *In one column and seven centimeter of space, he makes a basic sketch which isn't even fully rendered... and that sketch represents a deep satire on our country, it is that simple! Thus, it occurred to me what if RK Laxman has to make this film - then how would he make it? And inspiration happened! I decided that the "A day in the life of India" ad shall be one satire on the country, communicated in a simple way. Keeping this in mind, I began thinking of what do I want to comment upon? And this resulted in three interesting films!'*

What were these three films?

'The first ad film was the "Put it up" one. I wanted to show that how from a common man's perspective, does the whole activity of putting up a gigantic arch gate, just to welcome a minister's passing car looks. So, it's a fast paced movie where the background score simply has a guy saying in full speed, "Put it up" and an arch gate is being formed. Then, the minister's car passes and starts yet another round, where-in the man says, "Take it down". It was a sarcasm on the futility of the activity.

Then came the second film, which was a take on the Punjabi culture existing in Delhi. Wherein, people buy an INR. 80,000 Maruti 800 and then INR. 1.5 Lakh is spent on accessorizing it.

Reflecting that kahavat, "Chaar aane ki Murgi, Barah aane ka masala."

The third ad was a satire on the current status quo of our country. Two men are sitting at a railway station, with one reading a newspaper aloud, and the other listening to him. The rest is all a haze. So the guy who is reading the headlines from the newspaper, is like a rhyme, "Itne rape hue, itne murder hue, falane ne ghotala kiya, Sachin ne twenty-six runs ..." Suddenly, the man who is listening, interrupts and says, "Arey! Yeh to tu kal ki akhbar padh raha hai". Everything else remains the same day-after-day, except Sachin's score. These are the three satires I weaved into stories.'

How did you ensure that you inculcate the simplicity that RK Laxman stands for, in the ad?

'To evoke the raw honesty of RK Laxman's sketches in these ads, I decided to shoot these ads like a backyard production. No glamorous lights were used, there was no overwhelming background score ... just human voices. This was the first phase of "A day in the life of India". I shot all these three ads simultaneously.'

And then came the second phase, which had a spoof on Sachin Tendulkar. And one was about a Pension file with a hockey commentary in background?

'Yes, Pops. In the second phase, the first ad I did, was featuring a Sachin look-a-like and the sarcasm was that how the nation is having this one guy, do so many things. "Bechara ek aadmi, desh ke liye kya karta hai, brushing, washing. It was a take on the over-endorsement of Sachin.'

Then came the Hockey Commentary one, right?

'Yes, I believe it is the best sarcasm of the entire lot! It showcases the worst side of India. An old man's pension file does the rounds of the government office. In the background, the hockey commentary is running. It goes here, it is passed there and finally it hits the goal and reaches its destination, only when a bribe is given. At time when the line erupts , "India has won". The sarcasm hits hard and I feel, this is the most powerful part of the ad.'

Where did you shoot it and how?

'We had to recreate a government office and how we did it, is quite intriguing. The location was Wilson College. My task was to make it look like a government office and so, I asked my production team to go and get two truck-loads of "radii" – old newspapers. We piled up those newspapers all around the rooms and voila! we had the government office ready! As for, how did we shoot it, for all the Times of India ads, except the Rs. 100 note, I had adopted and evolved a style, that of hyper-speed with an effect of pixilation. So in the TOI File ad, there were two instances, one where the file simply travels from one place to another, but the second instances are where I have to give time to the shot, so that the audience registers what is going on.

Those moments, I was going to shoot in 500 frames, so that later it could speed up, and be made to normal. Thus, all the key actors, like the one who stops the file from going up and the one who takes the bribe, had to act in complete slow motion. (Prasoon literally does a slow-mo act for me and it's truly hilarious). Pops! The actors had a tough time. We had to take some re-takes and they couldn't move from their positions. It was a challenging shoot but it was fun. Finally, the third ad was the Rs. 100 note, which traverses the many circuits and comes back to its source. It was the only ad where I deviated a bit from the adopted style. I used a track and the film was shot in normal frame and not hyper-speed.'

As I talk to Prasoon about the light-hearted, yet hard-hitting sarcasm that he used for TOI, it brings me to the threshold of one of R. Balki's ad, where he too, borrowed the art of sarcasm to make a wake-up call on behalf of Tata Tea – "Jaago re"!

A Wake-up call

A tea not just to wake you up but also, to awaken you.›Tata Tea's "Jaago re" ads delved on the important, yet foolish issues of the country - right from its ridiculous activity of choosing a country's CEO without having any qualification barrier, to the oblivion towards the 49 per cent vote bank of women. R.

Balki connected Tata Tea to a noble angle and ever since, the tea encourages people to "Jaago re".

Balki tell us how Jaago re happened?

'When it comes to tea, often the marketing communication is weaved around the make of the tea. The tea-leaves are plucked from such and such gardens. But we don't realize one thing, the very fact, that consumers don't drink tea owing to which mountain it comes from … they drink tea because they like tea. Once over a coffee, I realized the difference between Tata Tea and other teas - it's the name "Tata" which has nobility attached to it. While other teas just wake you up for the morning, Tata Tea awakens you and with this, I hit the nail on its head. I coined the phrase, "Jaago re".

Once the soul was ready, we simply chose different situations to induce a "Jaago re" amongst our audience. We started with the Politician asking for vote and a youngster asking for his qualifications in return. We wanted to awaken the audience on these matters of foolishness and associate Tata Tea with the awakening. It worked brilliantly.'

How we choose to say a brand-story as an ad maker is what compels us to understand the varied moods, tones and shades of emotions. From them, we choose the one that will resonate the most with the audience. While Prasoon chose sarcasm to portray "A day in the life of India" and Balki chose "Jaago re", Agnello took a disturbing route to shake Mumbai from its slumber and bring to notice the crusading realities. "Mumbai Mirror" - a tabloid delivered every morning. Agnello shared with us the story of how he, with his team went about creating thirty seconds of hard-hitting realism.

Mirroring Realism

A native black & white ad which simply had a common Mumbaikar, shouting out loud, the injustice they have been subjected to. As he bawls over a megaphone, people take notice. The megaphone remains as a metaphor for the Mumbai Mirror. **Agnello tell us how did the idea happen?**

'Mumbai Mirror is a tabloid. Across the world, the tabloid as a format, has essentially two positioning available - one being a sensationalizing read and secondly, being this crusading, expose type of a tabloid. As I got thinking, I realized that in any city, there are victims of injustice. Some issues impact a large section and thus, they become a national issue. But there also exists a victim, who have been subjected to injustice too, but being a singular case, he/she doesn't get featured in the broadsheets. But the pain and atrocity of any injustice is constant. Thus, it is for cases like these, that a tabloid like Mumbai Mirror steps in. I felt that the crusading, journalistic, expose image was perfect for Mumbai Mirror.

I have known its editor and I personally also admire the tabloid, due to its extremely bold stands and investigative journalism. They are mostly out on the streets looking for stories. Once the image was clear in my mind, I captured it in a simple line; "It amplifies the unheard voices of the victims of the city". For instance, there is someone staying in Ambernath and he has been badly beaten up, we wouldn't know about his plight. But what if he has a tool, one that amplifies his voice and we are able to hear it every morning while having breakfast!'

So the idea was to be this crusader who comes in with stark realities?

'Yes! We wanted it to be a disturbing film. This specification featured in the brief too. To package and sell this idea to Mumbai Mirror, I had penned a nice write-up. Where-in I had written, "In our cosy homes, where you are relishing your corn-flakes and biscuit, a paper comes in ... to trouble you. It is the disturbing part of your conscience which slips under your door every morning, whether you like it or not. It comes and it hassles you!'

How did the megaphone come into picture?

'Once our insight and idea was clear, I had to find a metaphor for amplifying voices and a megaphone fit the bill perfectly. So, we give the victims a megaphone, and ask them to shout out their injustice ... for the whole of Mumbai to hear. And Pops! All the stories were real issues that Mumbai Mirror had spotted and covered. So the content was real in every sense.'

Yes! One of the many aspects that stand out about this film is its realism. How did you inculcate that?

'As I mentioned earlier, we had to be deliberately disturbing. "Lagna chahiye ki kuchh zyada ho gaya". So, we had decided to go all the way and make it look like a real, raw and documentary style ad. For instance, Abhinay Deo pushed me to take a very good call. He had said, we would shoot in native black and white. Often, we shoot it in normal colour and then convert it into black & white, so that in case, the client does not like it, we can retract back to colour. But here, we shot in black & white. Then the stories were real. Also the pack-shot which comes at the end, wherein you see Mumbai Mirror curled in the hands of a local train passenger, and he is holding the rod ... that too was a part of the script.

It is an observation from real life - long back, I often used to travel in local trains and I had observed fellow passengers carrying tabloids and not broadsheets while traveling. The

reason being it is easy to read, due to its size and you can easily twirl it and hold the rod along with it. That is where the idea of the pack-shot came from. To add a bit more realism, I chose the noise of the trains running as the background noise, which Ram Sampath later converted into a track.'

While the stories are real, are the people featured non-actors?

'No. They were all actors. In fact, the first guy who protests for his burnt books was a really weird character. He used to come to the shoot, would give his take on the megaphone by shouting out his lines and then, once we cut, he would go and settle in a corner and not talk to anyone. Again, come, give his take and retreat into a corner. After the shoot was complete, he simply took a cab and left. He did not speak a word to me or to Abhinay … or to anyone.'

Locations too, were quite authentic, the streets and bridges of Mumbai!

'That was an experience in itself. When we were shooting the mother, who was shouting for her children's milk being adulterated, we almost got arrested! We were shooting on this railway bridge at Bandra and we had no permission. You are not allowed to shoot on bridges just like that … and the MMRDA office was just opposite the bridge. We were just six to seven of us, doing the entire shoot, since we didn't want to be noticed. One of us was kept on watch, to see if there was any police around. Suddenly, in the middle of the shoot that guy comes and shouts, "Arey bhaago, bhaago woh MMRDA waale aa rahe hai…" (Run! The MMRDA officials are coming). So we all ran helter-skelter - Abhinay, the crew, actors and I. In the chaos, we left one megaphone behind.

It so happened, that one of our guys had a camera strapped onto his body. He was almost going to get caught, and to save himself, he boarded a BEST bus. He had no mobile on him. As for me, I ran and then after a while, called Abhinay and asked where he was? He asked me to come to a clearing area at a slum, behind the bridge. That is where the rest of the team was to be meeting. So

we gathered in there and were wondering what to do. Thereafter, I went to check upon th situation. I went back to the bridge and saw that the MMRDA officials were still there. They seemed to have recognized me and so, they stopped me and asked, "Tu bhi tha nah … un logo ke saath?" (Even you were a part of the shooting; right?). And I replied, "Nahin, mein to sirf shooting dekh raha tha" (No! I was just watching the shoot). I somehow wriggled out and called Abhinay, informing him that they were still around.

One of our team members proposed shooting at the Koliwada Bridge. It wasn quite similar. Once we went there, the MMRDA officials had already alerted the Koliwada team. So yet again, we were in a lurch. Then it struck me that there is a similar looking bridge in Wadala too. That we could go there as usually, it was a rather secluded place. So we rushed there and finished the remaining part of the ad there. Even for the man shouting on the bridge, stopping a Ministers car, we were shooting at Kemps Corner Bridge. And we are just not supposed to stop the traffic on it, so we had camera-men inside the homes, overlooking the bridge, shooting from the windows of the house so that no one knew. The passer-by's had no clue that it was a shoot. They assumed it to be a real incident. So, with all this insanity, we finished shooting for Mumbai Mirror and achieved what we wanted to!'

Any social reform either questions or educates. The rude awakenings make us think and the subtly educating ones, make us aware. As I latch onto the awareness string, I am led to these brilliant pieces of work, which create human awareness on some very socially sensitive issues. And more or less, their brilliance lies in their "Ideas". R Balki and Amit share with us "Sirji's ideas".

Ideas for Life

Two sub-castes; the Dhomiars and the Purmis fight. The only thing differentiating them is – their name. The matter is taken to the Panchayat and the Sarpanch ponders over the issue. Then his phone rings and with that, an idea clicks. He says in a staunch Haryanvi tone, "Aaj se nah koi Dhomiar, nah koi Purmi. Koi bhi apne naam se nahin jaana jayega" and

suddenly, the names become numbers, "99922626", people become numbers, roads become numbers and the one thing differentiating people is changed! Harmony seeps in and you are compelled to say, "What an Idea Sirji!" It is with this idea, that the brand "Idea" found its path-breaking identity. It is with this idea, that **Abhishek Bachchan** became Sirji, it is with this idea that the audience found entertaining, engrossing and thought provoking ideas for life.

The idea ads, right from the caste war, education, democracy, population, to an aware nation has brought forth the issues which India faces. It offers a simple yet, brilliant solution for it - through a mobile connection. The evolution of the ads has been quite interesting. It started with solving the age-old problems of India and grew to provide solutions for today's India. Both R. Balki; the Creative brain behind Idea and Amit Sharma; the Director of most of the Idea ads shared some really gripping stories. I got talking to my friend R. Balki on this, where-in he shared intriguing insights and the details of the campaign.

Tell us how did, 'What an Idea Sirji!' happen?

'Idea as a brand, had a very complicated base-line - something about technology that does something. In simple terms, it meant

that it is a fantastic product. What I was looking for, was an extremely simple way of saying the same thing. This made me coin the line, "What an Idea!" "Sirji", as a word was added later, while writing the script and dialogues. This is how the line "What an Idea" was born!'

How did this line render into a slew of creative ads?

'With the brand name being Idea and the base-line being "What an Idea!", it became quintessential to extend them and attach them to Ideas. Ideas, which aren't complicated strategies ... but solutions, which the mass understands. For them to be resonating with the mass, they needed to be "Ideas of life". They have to be child-like and yet, manifest a huge impact. That's because Ideas, by definition need to be big in its canvas. Simple, yet big were the kind of ideas we were looking for. This understanding about an Idea, became our anchor and we started fishing for prima facie solutions of the common issues; solutions which are almost at the edge of possibility but a bit unscientific.

I remember ***Nikhil*** *and* ***Ashwin*** *(both creative directors at Lowe Lintas) had come up with four to five such concepts; of which one was a single line, "Everybody has a number not a name". This line struck a chord within me. It triggered a fantasy I always had. We often see people fighting because of name! What if everybody had funny syllables as their identity? This led to our first script – where Sirji comes up with a brilliant idea of replacing names with numbers.'*

What was the client's reaction to this Idea?

'Until then, Idea had possessed a very serious, methodical communication tone. The bizarreness of the idea, did make them a bit hesitant. They asked me – "This will require you to be very cinematic." I said, "I will be very cinematic". Eventually, they were convinced and ever since, they have adored this light-hearted yet meaningful tone of communication. Post the caste ad, we did education which was yet again a figment of my fantasy. I always was concerned with this entire madness behind admissions in schools, and thought - place a phone at

every village, city, district locations and everyone can study! And with this format, we did Population, Democracy, Paper, Walk and Talk and Ullu bana-ving. We also did some fresh stuff like, "Honey bunny".'

Can you talk a bit about 'Ullu bana-ving"?

*'Idea wanted to do something different. As they were still talking about voice and SMS, now they wanted to speak of the Internet. The usual angles that internet took, were speed and connectivity. All I felt was, that if a brand like Idea has to talk about the internet, then it needs to have a unique flavor. This led me yet another reality of India. India is a con country, owing to the ignorance in the country. So, I felt what if the phone in your hand, with internet, becomes an awareness tool? What if it fights the ignorance and the foolishness that exists? Hence, the line, "Idea internet jab laga-oing, India ko no ullu bana-ving". **Hemant Bhandari** of Chrome Pictures shot this film*

Pops, I would like to mention here, that all of the Idea ads are a complete team effort. It is a closely-knit effort. Also, I would especially like to mention that one very important factor, to pull off Idea ads is the need for a very high quality production value, which Hemant brought on board and Amit in his direction methods. They have literally shot 100 cans for an ad film, who does that! Also, my agency team like Ashwin and Nikhil ... they have been an integral part.'

The team effort clearly reflects in the quality of ads. Now let us come to Sirji. Abhishek is Sirji, what made you choose Abhishek Bachchan?

'He was the perfect fit. He has a fresh face. He hadn't endorsed anything else ... and there was no particular character associated with him. Thus, he could be any character! Also, when you think of a celebrity, you will come up with almost four to five brands attached to him. However, with Abhishek Bachchan, there is one thing that comes to your mind ... and

that is Sirji; one brand comes to mind, that is Idea. He renders a uniqueness, which very few endorsers do for a brand. This makes him a valuable celebrity - since he is strongly associated with only one brand.'

As Balki spoke of the creative process, I had Amit share the adventure of shooting Idea films, as it has been one of his most coveted and close-to-heart projects.

Amit how has it been crafting Idea films?

'Pops! It's been a dream; a journey I have thoroughly enjoyed and still do! It all started when Balki sir saw one of the commercials made by my team and me. That was for Condoms – "Bindaas bol Condom". Back then, Balki sir was shooting for "Cheeni Kum" and once he saw our commercial, he loved it. He called me and said that the "Bindass bol Condom" ad is amazing. After the initial interactions, one day, I came to know about Idea so I called Balki sir and told him "I want to do this film", and he replied, "You are only doing this film". Unaware of his sincere tone, I reiterated, "Sir, I'm serious! I want to do this film!" and then he said with finality, "I am saying the same thing ... you are doing this film". I was thrilled! I couldn't still believe it was happening. He signed-off saying, I will have Nikhil read out the script to you; since he knew I don't read scripts, I only hear them.

Usually, Idea's scripts are of six to seven pages, which need to be converted into sixty seconders. When I heard the first script of Idea, I knew it would take my team and me to newer heights. To etch the script into my being, I called an actor, who along with me, enacted the varied parts of the script and as we were at it, new scenes were emerging in my mind. Shots like "Lohe pe hatoda maar raha hai koi", then the scene where Jalebi is being made and someone comes and shout 992824-ke ghar pe bachha hua hai. So I called Nikhil from the agency Lowe Lintas who works with Balki sir and asked him if I may add something to the script. He had no issues with it. So the improvisation went on ... till the last moment.'

Balki had told me Sirji was added later in the script?

'Ya! Pops, when I got the script, the line was "What an Idea Sir!" I hail from the North and have this compulsive need to add "ji". So I asked Nikhil if we could make it "Sirji". He loved the idea and that it how, sir became Sirji.'

Where did you shoot this ad?

'The caste and name becoming numbers; this ad we shot at a village called Samodh. It is forty kilometers from Delhi, towards Jaipur. Barring Abhishek's shot, we shot the entire film in Samodh and Abhishek's shot we finished at Film city, Mumbai. We have followed the format for every Idea Ad. Abhishek's part we shoot at Film city and the rest is done at varied locations.'

So how was the entire experience shooting in Samodh and in Film city, what kind of fun unfolded during the shoot?

'It was great fun! Especially in Samodh, I felt as if I was in a studio and not a village. I was given an unbelievably free hand. If I told my production guy that I wanted to install a camera on the window of a house, he was like, "Kariye nah sir". If I would say that I wanted to put a camera on the roof of that house, he would say, "Haan sir rakhiye nah". If I would say that I want this villager to be in the frame, he would say, "Haan sir karega nah". So, the village was extremely co-operative. I felt, as if it was my own hired studio. I had so much fun that I kept shooting and creating new situations. Pops! I never say cut, I keep rolling and shooting, the actors,they keep improvising; until the moment I feel that they don't have anything new to provide. Hemant kepts coming next to me and nudging me, "Amit cut bol yaar, cut bol".

Finally my Producer Hemant and Nikhil were like, "Bus sir! Ab kitna shoot karoge!" As for Abhishek's shoot in Film city, we had created an entire set of a village - a Panchayat set up. We had put sand, mud and all, to get the authentic feel. Abhishek came to the shoot and unfortunately, it started raining profusely on the very first day. All our efforts went in vain. We had to reschedule the shoot for another day.'

Any on-the-sets anecdotes?

'Yes! One really funny episode happened when we were shooting in Samodh. It was really hot! We were ready for a take. I was perched on top of a roof to take the shot, but somehow, the actor - a female who was supposed to be in the scene, was taking a lot of time to get ready. "Uska make-up chale hi jaa raha hai". I wasn't able to comprehend the delay, so I called for Mishraji; one of our crew members and said "Mishraji, kya chal raha hai zara dekho!", he replied, "Haan dekhta hoon sir". Mishraji went inside the small home where she was, and came out pacing here and there. I lost my patience." Mishra, yaar kya chal raha hai itna time kyun lag raha hai?" To which he replied, "Sir do minute sir … ho gaya sir! Bus nipple lag rahe hai sir, nipple lag rahe hai!". All of us were stunned! Well, soon we realized what he meant was that Lapel mic lag rahe hai. I was almost about to fall off the roof, laughing.

Yet another fun part is our after-shoot party. We were in Samodh. In the evening, we set up a platform in one of the fields there, called a local DJ and then, had a dance competition between all the departments. The winning team would get INR. 50,000 as an award.'

Lovely! So who won?

'Oh! The make-up team, they took everyone's case.'

What about Casting?

'We casted from Mumbai, Jaipur and Samodh too.'

What happened post the shoot?

'Editing happened! I was editing and Balki sir called, asking "Amit kya hua?" and I replied, "Sir five minutes cut ready sir" and he was like, "What!" So I assured him that I would cut further. I spent some more hours and finally came down to 3 and half minutes. I informed him about it. So Balki sir was like – "Wait, I will come". He came in and looked at the footage and said, "First remove all the wide shots". And I protested a bit. So

he said, "Amit! How will we make a sixty seconder!" I gave up and said –"Sir you do it, I cannot. Because I get attached to my shot." After spending four hours on it, he called me in and he showed the edit to me, and I understood what he meant. Based on this, I made a whole new edit and we mix-matched both his and mine edits to get the final product.'

What shot did you enjoy doing the most?

'Pops, I truly loved the last shot! There, Abhishek is shown in a wide angle with one leg on his other leg, sitting royally, his feet moving - when the guy next to him says, "What an Idea Sirji!" That shot came to me, because I often sit like that on a Charpoy (a traditional bed, made of ropes) and keep shaking my feet. So I told my Director of Photography to *keep the camera near Abhishek's feet and we will take. We had put a music to match the movement. By mistake, my production guy played the NG (no good) tape, and the track completely matched so we kept it as is. This proves that most of the brilliance happens when it isn't planned.'*

Ideas for life - a simple thought has the potential to be an unbelievable impact. What I love about the Idea series is its ability to catch the pulse of India! We delve in and present it in a light-hearted; yet hassling way. You can't escape the truth - it says; wrapped in entertainment and good humour. Balki and Amit both shared a lot more about the Idea ads, which I would unravel at the right junctures of this book.

Talking of a thread that reflects India, how can I miss out on the thread that joined India in an entirely new way! "9 Baj Gaye Kya?" is a question we have all asked ever since Kaun Banega Crorepati entered our lives. Every Indian has revered the show, but with it, what was equally loved was the depth its ads possessed. We had Amitabh Bachchan playing the friend, philosopher and guide. Sharing bountiful wisdom sitting on the hot seat. It started with "Koi bhi sawaal chota nahin hota"; a humorous take on the importance of a simple question. **Nitesh Tiwari** had shared a lot about this, which I will speak on, during the milestone of the book, where ads also have been a source of humour!

But what I choose to share at this juncture, are two KBC ads. Ads, that touched the soul of the nation, by pressing the nerves that hurt the most and also soothing them. First, was the tear jerking ad on the girl child and second was the overwhelming Hindu-Muslim neighbour families' ad. Nitesh Tiwari the creative brain behind KBC ads and Amit Sharma its Director, share the beauty that went behind these two KBC legends.

A Million Dollar Question

Mubarak ho Ladki hui hai!

A tryst of a girl; her plight in a country like India, was weaved into a story, where gender discrimination was abhorred and the power of knowledge was celebrated, with the voice and support of none other than, Amitabh Bachchan. Life of Asha began with a line – "Mubarak ho! Ladki hui hai" Her father's frowning face and her rightful existence was validated, when she was on the hot-seat of KBC and had won a Crore. She said, "Mubarak ho! Ladki hui hai"; the ad is one of my personal favourites, it has always brought tears in my eyes. Each time, I talk about it, I feel the lump in my throat. And so I tell to Nitesh,

Nitesh it is one of my favourite commercials. You made me proud with this ad. I wish, I had done it! I have presented it at many forums and conferences including New York with subtitles; Each time it has received an overwhelming applause. I am all ears to know about the stories attached to it.

'I quite remember your reaction, when I had first shared the script with you. You often have called me a "Boys hostel man" and changed the guy protagonist in my scripts, to a girl. But this time, I had scripted the life of a girl. Unfortunately, I could not go to the shoot of the ad. But ***Ashwini,*** *my wife did go, since she is the Executive Creative Director. She came back from the shoot with loads of experiences from Haryana, which is where we shot. When she narrated the reality to me, I felt proud of being associated with this campaign. The incidents we weaved in our ad were actually a reality there.'*

What kind of incidents did she share?

'She had been to a remote town in Haryana. There, the Mukhiya (Village head) told her and the crew, "6 baje ke baad bahar mat nikalna, kyunki uske baad inn choron pe mera bhi control nahin hota". One instance, they went out drinking and Ashwini wasn't allowed in the bar. She was told "Idhar choriyan allowed nahin hai". When she tried a hookah out there, everyone was scandalized. The women in the village usually are in veil (ghoonghats) and in multiple instances, they would call Ashwini aside and in complete bewilderment would ask, "Aapko allowed hai aise Pant pehen-na?" "Aap kaam karte ho?" They were shocked to know that a girl can work outside and also earn! And in those conversations, Ashwini came across the little dreams of those women. At night, when they sat with Ashwini and served her food, they would often share their dreams, "Meri bhi ek chori hai, mujhe usse padhana hai".

Having lived with the reality for some days, Ashwini had come back really disturbed. She was really hoping that an ad like this would bring in some change in the society. Pops, when you are doing a job for a brand and simultaneously, contributing to the society with the same work, it is a beautiful feeling. I am sure Amit will be able to share a lot more stories on this one. Amit shot all the KBC commercials and we were glad he did. Amit embraced KBC ads like his own baby. One requires such a partnership to dole out successful campaigns. He owned KBC like we owned it and we needed such a commitment from the director of the ad.'

And for a lot more insights, I turned to Amit

'Pops! The KBC girl child ad, I decided to shoot in the most difficult location - at a village called Bahadurgarh in Haryana. When I had received the script, the last line of what the girl was to say originally, was on the lines of, "Mein chahati hoon ki aap log apni betiyon ko saraahe, unko aage badhne de". I wasn't very happy with this line. I told Nitesh instead of this, can't we have just one hard-hitting line, which acts

like a slap across the face? So he asked, what should we end with? I suggested, "What if we end with the line with which the film started ... and make her say, Mubarak ho ladki hui hai!" Nitesh looked at me smiled and said done sir. For safety sake we shot both the lines but went with "Mubarak ho". Coming back to the shoot in Bahadurgarh - for the first scene we converted a school's corridor into a hospital. The guy who says, "Mubarak ho lalaji!" is actually the sarpanch of the village.

I went to him and asked him if we would act. He replied, "Haan kar lenge! Par karna ke hoga". So, I explained him the dialogue and he said confidently "Yeh to bol lenge ... us mein kya hai". I narrated him the entire story and asked him whether such things happen. Do people become sad when a girl is born. He agreed and said it happens quite frequently. It made me feel really sad. The village is in the Rohtak district and my mom is from Rohtak. So, I know the place well. Pops, girls aren't allowed to act there. During the casting phase, we were also looking at locals and people from Rohtak and I did find a very good theatre group. But very few were willing to step up and act. So, I found my protagonist in the actor - Usha Jhadhav, she was brilliant. One shot of the film; the one in the office where she gets a promotion was shot in Mussoorie. I had seen an office there and had found it perfect. So for that one shot we took ***Ushaji*** *there.'*

What was the client's reaction when they saw the film?

'When we presented the film to ***Sneha,*** *our client; by the end of the film she just got up crying, excused herself and ran out of the room. I actually ran after her asking, "Arey! Achhi lagi ki buri yeh to bata ke jaao!". She has actually stopped watching this ad, because every time she does, she cries."'*

Such is the power of creativity, which is inspired from life. Everyone has a white paper in front of them and it is in their hands, what they choose to ink it with -What values you transfer through words. It's the writer's power! Most of the time you write what you are and you are what you write. What the ad chose to show, was real. KBC witnessed

a woman participant who came from the interiors of Madhya Pradesh. She was a primary school teacher from a small town. She could not get a newspaper. Radio was the only source of information for her, and yet, she answered the question "Where did the Global summit on environment take place?" And she had said, "Copenhagen" and won INR 6.5 Lakh. People were amused to know that she was aware of it. And the KBC ad captures this reality, beautifully. Yet another chord that KBC ad struck using its Phone-a-friend lifeline was the recent Hindu-Muslim neighbour ad.

Phone-a-Friend!

Typically warring neighbours - one Hindu and one Muslim, living next to each other since years, divided because of the age-old illusionary divide. The youngest son from the Hindu family gets the opportunity to participate in KBC. As he is leaving for the show, an age old, atypical tiff unfolds between the two families and one expects this to go on forever. But something different happens on the hot-seat. The guy uses the lifeline; phone-a-friend. The neighbouring Muslim family is watching the show attentively, when their phone rings. The old uncle picks up the phone and the boy asks, "Chacha Asalam-walekum ka kya matlab hota hai?" With this the divide dissolves and many hearts are won. "Yahan sirf paise nahi, Dil bhi jeete jaate hai".

To get to the heart of this campaign, I entered into a free wheeling conversation with its writer and director Nitesh Tiwari and what unfolded was an engrossing dialogue.

Hindu-Muslim angle a highly sensitive topic, very repetitive and yet, you managed to give it a fresh angle. How? I asked Nitesh.

'Until now, all the ads were based on the positioning of "Knowledge", "Gyan hi appko apna haq dilata hai". We felt that we can take a fresh perspective this time, since repeating the same base would cause a bit of fatigue. So, we began thinking and someone from the team came up with a very interesting insight about the show. Summing it up in one line,

he said, "Khelta ek hai, par jeet ta sara desh hai". Such is the spirit of the game! Everyone who isn't on the hot seat also participates and feels like they have won. But one thing we felt, which was wrong about the campaign was that it felt a bit narcissistic, a bit too self-acclaiming. But since the insight was great, we stayed with it and started writing the scripts. So scripts like Kohima and Hindu-Muslim neighbors came in. And we realized we need to rephrase the line and make it sharp.

At this point, I realized that no one remembers who won how much until the amount is in crores. But you do remember the person on the wheelchair who wanted to travel the world with the money; the mother who wanted to educate her kid with the money. Thus, the game was never about money. With this insight, came the line – "Yahan sirf paise nahi, dil bhi jeete jaate hai". Winning money is incidental, what people actually do through this show is win hearts. Around this line, we wrote three scripts Kohima, Hindu-Muslim and the Loudspeaker one.'

I believe you shot those ads?

'Yes! Since Amit was not available … because he was busy with his movie Tevar.'"

Where did you shoot the Hindu-Muslim Neighbours ad?

'At a town called Dhangadhra in Gujarat. We took quite a while, searching for the apt location, because I was seeking a town which emanates a feel that both the communities have been living in the locality for a very long time. Dhangadhra as a location, looked perfect as is, in its natural make. The locality had a temple, while the railings in the area had a Muslim make. The only thing I needed to do, was to create the partition in between, as we wanted to add yet another visual element to the drama. The interior shots; the ones inside the house are shot at the same location, because I realized no matter what level of art direction you manage, such authenticity could not be achieved. The houses in reality were very small but I wanted to give them a vastness … thus, I used wider lenses.'

As for the casting?

'The casting was spread over many places. The old Hindu uncle was from Lucknow, the Muslim uncle was from Bhopal, one person was from Ahmedabad and the rest were from Mumbai. I spent quite a lot on the casting to achieve realism. Also, once after the launch, I was chatting with some journalists and for some fun I asked them, "Tell me who from the casted actors are Muslim in real life?" The first guess was obvious - the old Muslim uncle, which was correct. Then they said, the two guys who played Muslim uncle's kin. And then I replied, "Actually in real life, both the boys are Hindu". At that moment, I was reminded of a scene from the film PK, wherein he dresses everyone differently and then says,"Yeh sab fashion ... sirf fashion ka farak hai".'

It's these little realities of our nation, our society and our being, that are weaved in as insights and a change is initiated. But to initiate change, outright preachy doesn't work the message needs to have a human appeal; a hook that latches onto the audiences heart and mind. Talking about realities of our country, AIDS has been an issue that has lingered for long. An issue that has been talked at length and almost reached a deaf ear, until Balbir Pasha happened! An ad that dived deep into the roots of the issue and presented ideas that spread like wild fire! Preeti Nair took us through this brilliance.

AIDing Awareness

'Apart from being a brilliant thirty seconder, Balbir Pasha reached out to people in many ways. It was truly a phenomenon! Preeti, please share the details about how was Balbir Pasha conceived?"

'Pops, PSI India sought a high impact AIDS awareness campaign, specifically for Mumbai; Mumbai being the city that attracts most amount of migrants and has most of about of labourers along with truckers. These are communities that visit sex-workers regularly. The objective was to promote the practice of safe sex amongst them. An objective, which had lost lustre with the concerned target audience. They hardly paid any attention to this important issue. It was a black hole! The challenge was to say it in a manner that the community in question, listened to and absorbed the message. Someone in our team had thought of this as an event idea, but we liked it so much that we made it a campaign. We began by simply observing reality and mined out two powerful human insights. We had conducted an exercise of talking to the people who visit sex-workers regularly and almost everyone had someone they knew who had got AIDS. Yet, they felt they were free of its risk.

This provided us with an insight that as humans, we enjoy a catastrophe even like AIDS, as long as it is someone else's reality. We all love to hear these via-via travelling stories and absorb it as gossip. Secondly, in our talks we also figured that three myths existed with respect to AIDS, "I won't get AIDS because I have a regular girl", "She looked healthy I am sure she doesn't have AIDS", "When I am drunk, I often forget wearing a condom". These insights gave way to the soul - the story, a

fictional character and his chances of getting AIDS. Thus, came the line, "Balbir Pasha ko AIDS hoga kya?" We had launched both; television ads and the outdoor billboards simultaneously.'

How did the name 'Balbir Pasha' happen?

'It's rather funny! For the operating title of the project, we had used one of our copywriters name and internally, it was a really revered joke. But when it came to finalizing the name of our fictional characters, we were looking for a name which was neutral in terms of any community or religion. Also, it should have been peculiar enough to stick in the mind of the audience. It had to be a name which sounded a little immoral and exhumed; an atypical sexual, male chauvinistic bravado. Thus we had shortlisted some names of which Balbir Pasha was one and that became the final choice.'

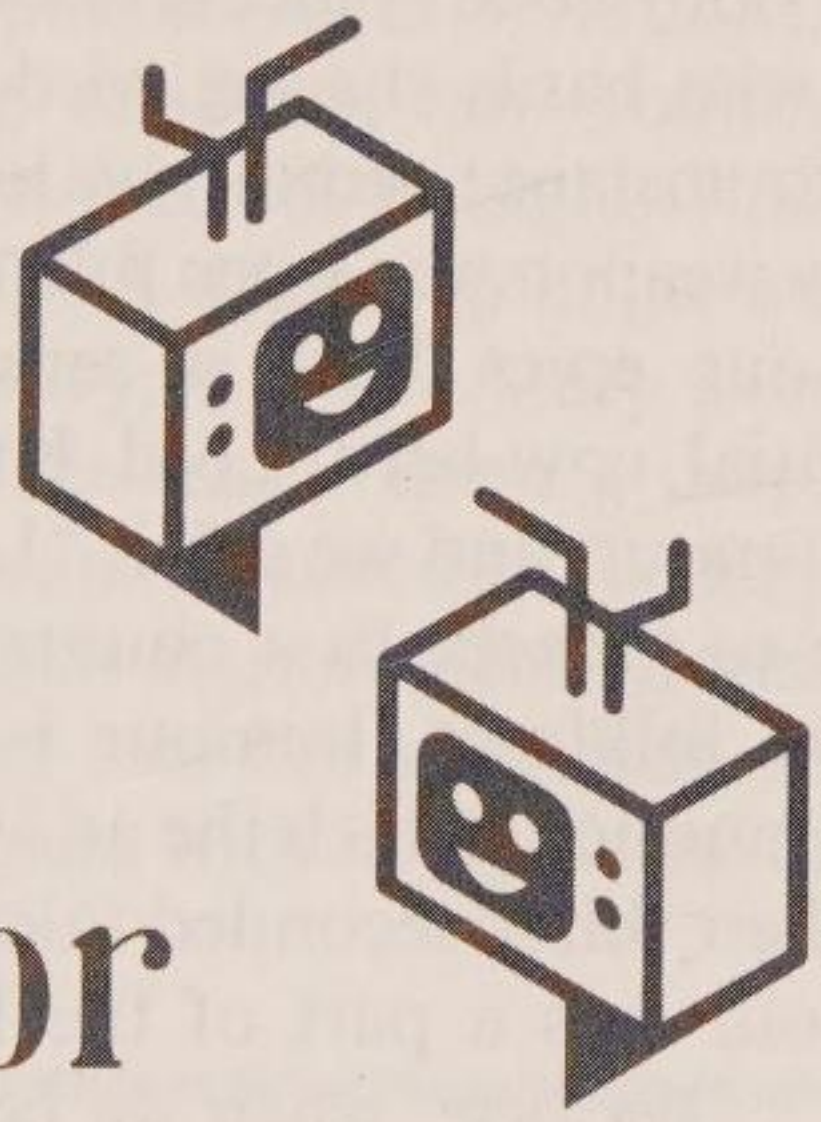
Did you face any flak for using the name Balbir Pasha?

'Not much Pops! We just received a couple of letters. But where we did face a lot of flak was for using the name Manjula ... since it's a common one. We had used the line, "Balbir Pasha ki regular Manjula hai" but the reason we stuck to the name Manjula was, because it was a reality. In our interviews, we had come across a couple of guys who said their regular choice was Manjula. So the multiplicity of partners was right there in front of us. The client was gutsy enough to let a real name come forth.'

We all know the statistical response this brilliant ad had garnered. For instance, the editor of TOI had received letters thanking him for the campaign. Due to it, businesses in red-light areas like, Grant Road and Bombay Central had literally come to a stand-still. But tell us the experiences you had, which made you feel, that yes! the ad has reached its destiny!

'Oh! Many experiences! For instance, in our interviews after the ad, we had people saying, 'Bahut darr lag gaya yeh ad dekh ke", "Peechle paap yaad aagaye". Then, if you are aware that near Worli, every New Year's they burn an old man's effigy as a sign of bidding adieu the old and welcoming the new. The year Balbir Pasha was released, the ritual had two edifices ... that

of Balbir Pasha and Manjula, and they were burnt. Everyone from taxi drivers, local train passengers were talking about it. So much so, that at our own sets, light-boys and spot-boys used the name Balbir Pasha as an abuse, "Abey Balbir Pasha! Lights idhar la be". So these experiences, made me feel elated. Owing to this success we also extended the campaign to Tamil Nadu.'



The Humor Connection

The Humor Connection

Every *"once upon a time"* that our grandparents; our parents narrated to us and now as we continue to narrate to the coming generations - was filled with a plethora of emotions. While the stories have been about bravery and morals, they unfailingly had an element of fun and laughter. We have giggled through life and learnt a lot. Wit and humour are subtle teachers. They impart the most intense truths with a light heart; the effect stays forever. As kids, each one of us remember the clown who made us laugh at the circus. Everyone has that funny uncle in the family who cracks jokes and is the heart of the party. All of us have grown to love the Bollywood comedians who made our bellies ache. We have had wise bards sharing wisdom and knowledge through humour - for instance, recently we lost a legend **Khushwant Singh,** whose only weapon was a pen full of humour!

Even our epics have a sense of wit and irony! Our quintessential cow-herd Lord Krishna, had an impeccable sense of humour, and we call it "Leela". He used puns,ironies and satire to preach. In a country whose culture is built on stories and folklores, humour is an emotion that is much loved. An emotion, which the ad-world has adopted and used, to make their thirty seconded tales interesting. I wouldn't say that humour was a part of the Indian advertising since its inception ... because, when we began, we possessed a selling mind and not a telling mind.

Often a product and its benefits were depicted frame after frame and this depiction was augmented with a bit of frivolity, in the form of westerns lifestyle elements. It was when the makers realized that advertising is an art which doesn't require to sell ... but to tell a story, that any and every individual can relate to. With this realization, a whole new creative horizon came into being. Because now advertising was about telling stories; your stories and our stories. Thus, elements like music, emotions, drama and humour started to weave in. If we pick humour, its many shades and genre have been used! Right from slap-stick comedy, wit, satire to dark humour - it is all there.

For instance, the longest running campaign Amul, is nothing but the art of using a current reality, surrounding our lives and rendering it into a piece of social commentary - which is light hearted and witty. And as we talk of current affairs and humour, I am compelled to bring in one of the most recent ad that we all loved and laughed due to! It is the Fevicol 2014 Election ad. An ad that wittingly wished for a government that sticks!

Fevicol ka Jod

The 2014 election was one of the most eventful dramas that unfolded on the stage, of world's largest democracy. It was a complete blockbuster, packed with emotions, humour, suspense, fiascos, breaking relations, new coalitions and a perfect climax. Every bit of it was nail-biting. In this mother of stories lived many little tales. A drama so huge, was relevant to every citizen of the country; it was a story shared by all, each tale telling its own little truth. Even a carpenter who makes chairs had his own plans attached to the larger scheme of elections. Fevicol, with their eternal creative minds, Piyush Pandey and Prasoon Pandey told this story with an eccentric sense of humour; an ad, which, with its light heartedness and wit made us, laugh.

Three parties, three different kinds of chair and a smart carpenter. One in the shape of a lotus, the other an adjustable hand shaped one and the third, a cocktail of many to be made one. In the shape of the chairs lived the irony of our country's power and politics; all of this topped with the even smarter opportunistic idea of a tea vendor, to sell the winning chair for three times the price, because at the end only one will be relevant in the market. A story so simple had an equally complex behind the scenes.

I met both Piyush and Prasoon separately and we spoke about all the popular Fevicol ads, which have entertained us in perpetuity; the election story being one of them. At first, I caught up with Prasoon and the evening was full of his quirky storytelling. Most of the conversation brewed in Hindi. I would attempt to keep some of his one-liners and wit intact, by quoting him verbatim. Relaxed in his lavish, artistically designed living room we set the ball rolling with this latest piece of work, 'Fevicol Election 2014, how did that happen?'," I asked.

'On 8 April 2014, early morning, I woke up to my phone ringing. All groggy from sleep, I picked it up to hear Piyush on the other side. "What are you doing?" he asked and I replied "Sleeping". We all know him of being an early riser and he is so aggressive, that he gets upset to know that you are still sleeping. Then he said, "Yaar ek idea sun!" (Listen to this idea). He then went on to narrate an idea which involved the elections and Fevicol. Then he asked for my feedback. I replied saying "We have already done something similar". To this, he replied, "OK" and hung up.

Fifteen minutes later, he called back and said, "Ab yeh wala sun" (Now listen to this one). He wasn't giving up. I heard the idea and said "Wow!" To this, he asked, "So should I narrate this to the client?" "Ya!" I beamed. Piyush called ***Madhukar bhai,*** *who was in his car, travelling to Amritsar; he heard the idea on the phone and gave us a green signal. Piyush informed me about the approval and I said, "Great then! Let's sit and discuss!" to which he replied, "We don't have the time to sit and discuss, it is for the elections and I want it to be ready by 13 April 2014." I replied, "OK" And thus began, the insane week of making this ad.*

We were to shoot on the 11th, before which we were required to keep everything ready. Because we did not have much time for casting, I already had a name in mind which would be perfect for the character. I called for ***Manoj Pawah*** *to be the carpenter, but he wasn't available. So, I went for the next suitable caste,* ***Gajraj****. I was more excited to make the chairs, so I started sketching what I had in mind. The lotus one came to me obviously, so did the hand one with a little twist of it being adjustable but the third chair was the tricky one. So I thought and then told my art director to call for five completely different chairs; it was essential that they were completely different from each other.*

I asked him to keep them at the sets and said, "I will come the next morning at the sets and see what to do with them". The next morning, I reached the set and ordered the carpenter to follow my instructions. I asked him to cut the chairs from weird ends and asked him to join them together one after the other. He followed and the end result was a cocktail of different chairs. The issue here was, that it was understood that the chairs were different … but I also wanted them to look like one. So I ordered him to fix a continuous line of red cushions along, with the same cloth. With this, even the third chair was ready and now it was shooting time. The entire process was totally fun-filled, especially working with Piyush! He is like a child; always excited.

He wrote the entire story, and then said, fine we have told the joke of the three different chairs but this joke needs a good end! That is when the line, "Teen guna daam pe bechiyo, market mein to ek hi jaani hai … baaki to yahin dhari reh jaani hai" (Charge three times the amount … since, out of these three, only one shall be relevant in the market. The other two will be rendered useless). With this line, the commercial got an interesting end. The satire was well connected with Fevicol. Because we wanted the chair made of Fevicol, to reflect the strength and stability of the upcoming leader of the country. It was a crazy ride! We thought of the idea on 8 April 2014, shot on 11 April 2014, submitted it on 13 April 2014 and it was on air on 14 April 2014! Phew!'

While this story pulled a larger string, many Fevicol ads find their roots in the real life insights of Piyush and Prasoon. If we look closely, our lives are full of anecdotes and many are

funny. Comedy of errors and fun-filled observations live all around us. The Pandey brothers and in-fact all good creative minds of the ad world and every good storyteller, possess the knack of borrowing from life. And one such borrowed life insight, manifested to be an overwhelming success! It is an ad that each one of us still love. An ad, that had a bus overloaded with people, who almost impossibly hung onto it and traversed their journey. And a small banner on the rear of the bus, telling us that it is "Fevicol ka Jod".

The Possessed Bus

The Pandey brothers hail from Rajasthan and the observations and insights they have made, living their lives, are often weaved into interesting anecdotes, which transform into memorable ads. For instance, the Fevicol ad, where a little kid shouts out loud, asking if anyone has watered the quintessential 'Tulsi plant'. In response, out comes an extensive, elaborate joint family. The family portrayed in the ad is an intrinsic reflection of how the Pandey brothers have grown up, in a closely knit joint family. The characters they choose, come to life on screen and are extremely relatable because they are from real life. For instance, the highly acclaimed, appreciated and loved Fevicol Bus ad, depicts a journey that Prasoon and Piyush used to make as kids from Jaipur to Jobner.

Narrating his life's anecdotes, Prasoon shares the work that went behind creating the magic called the Fevicol Bus ad. '*As kids, we used to travel a lot in and around Rajasthan. My father was a manager at a co-operative bank and he used to travel to different villages, owing to his work. Often, my siblings and I used to join him by sneaking into his car. This was the time when we used to get a chance to see the world from outside. There have been times when we have had the opportunity to observe the same world up-close and personal. During our vacations, we used to visit our aunt who lived in Jobner, which was just two hours away from Jaipur. For such short distance travels, we were sent alone; our parents used to buy us tickets, put us on a bus and at the Jobner stop, someone would pick us up.*

Often, these buses are overloaded with people; animals all travelling together. In these trips, we used to encounter interesting characters. The images of these childhood travels have stayed with us and it is these images, which we used in the Fevicol Bus ad. Technically, I could have easily shot the ad in Maharashtra, near Malshej Ghats or anywhere for that matter, but I felt the faces I will get in Maharashtra, wouldn't be as interesting. I needed interesting, unique faces that exude different characters; each a story in themselves because the ad wasn't going to have any dialogues or story.

At this juncture, my childhood journeys came back to me and I realized where I would get the interesting faces that I needed; Jaiseamer. Thus, I sent two quotes to my client. Intrigued by two quotes, they asked my preference and I said Jaisalmer. They without questioning any further, approved of it."

As he talked about the faces that featured in the ad, I realized one could not miss their authenticity. I was curious and asked, "So all those people who featured in the ad ... were they actors? How did the casting happen?" To which he said, *None of them are actors. The casting is completely local. They are people picked up from surrounding villages. I reached three days prior to the date of shoot at Jaisalmer and asked my production team to find 200 people from the nearby villages. So they came back with 200 people. The next important thing was to ensure that the people turn up daily, until the shoot is completed.*

The next morning when people came at the shoot, the first thing I did was create the composition. I made everyone sit to create and interesting set up - some on top of the bus, many inside, on the sides, on the bonnet; behind I filled every nook and corner of the bus. We also added a goat for authenticity. Then I clicked a picture of this entire composition, so that we all remembered who is sitting where and the continuity doesn't get disturbed. With this, we arrived at the stage of preparing for the shoot.'

'So, did you select people out of the 200?At the end, how many people were there on the bus actually?' I asked. *'No! I did not select. I casted each one of them. Thus, in all, there were 200 people who had boarded the bus. They were placed inside, outside, on top of the bus, on the bonnet, on the sides. For the people who were standing on the sides, we had made wooden platforms, so that they have a comfortable place to stand. As for the people on the bonnet, we had literally tied them up, to ensure that they do not end up dashing and pushing and moving each other due to the frantic movement of the bus. The driver was an actual bus driver, and we took an interesting shot of him because it looked as if he is juicing sugarcane and not steering.'*

Yes, I remember the ride looked really bumpy, was it because the road being uneven?

'Actually, there is an interesting story behind that bumpy road too. In my thought, I wanted the bus to be a bus which is possessed. One has no clue where it is coming from, where is it going … it is just riding through in a sloppy, lazy and bumpy way. In order to achieve this possessed bus, we deliberately dug potholes on the mud stretches.

The other important aspect here was, that my Director of Photography – ***Danny Pope*** *needed to have the bus backlit all the time, during the entire shoot. In simple terms, he wanted the sunlight to be always behind the bus, which meant that we had to shoot at different angles, depending on the direction of the sun and the time of the day. To attain this, we created ten different stretches and then, dug potholes side by side, on each stretch.*

We began shooting. So, the bus started to drive on a particular stretch and I realized, it was jumping through the potholes.

But I wanted a swaying movement. So then, it occurred to me and I asked the production team to fill up alternate potholes and this is how we got the bus possessed. Now, as we started to shoot, one very funny incident happened. We had placed a goat on top of the bus at the edge, without realizing that the movement of the bus is something the goat won't like. As the bus swayed, the goat got uncomfortable and as a result it peed, and the pee fell on a twelve-year-old boy sitting on the bonnet. The moment this happened, everyone on the bus; the entire crew burst out laughing. At first, the kid did not react much, but the goat peed every half an hour and people laughed. This mockery of his, angered the kid and he was getting all edgy.

Unfortunately, we couldn't change the position of either of them, since we had already taken some shots. Now I realized, that the kid was getting so irritated, that if the situation was not brought under control, he would leave … never to return. So, I asked one of my production colleagues to the take the kid away for a while and then, I addressed the rest of the crowd on the bus - that no one will dare laugh. Once the message was clear, we called the kid back and started to shoot. The goat peed on the boy but this time, everyone covered their mouths and hid their outburst. The kid was happy, as he could not hear anyone laugh. But it was hilarious to see people behind him, controlling their laughter. It is an unforgettable incident.'

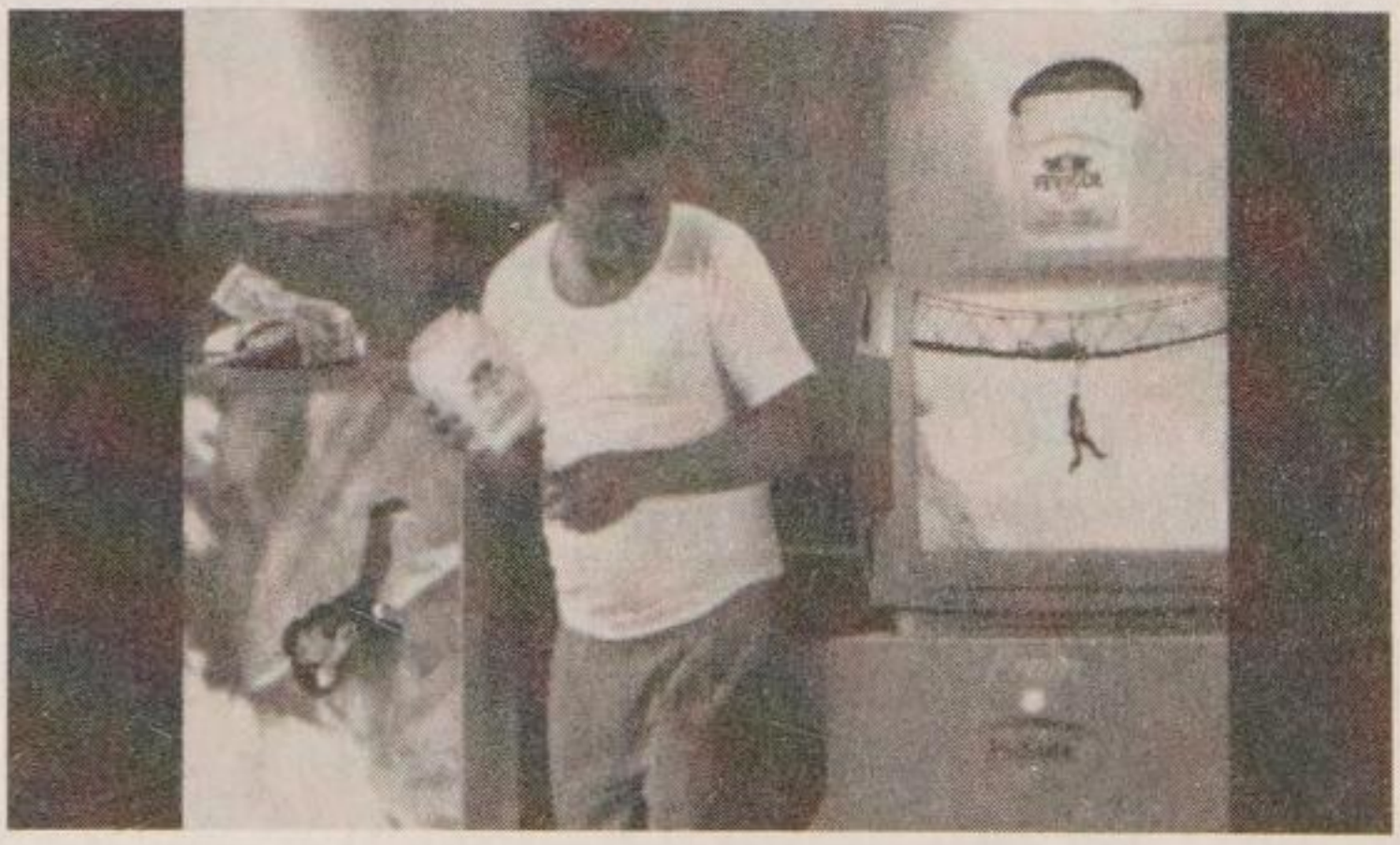
I too, had to put in a lot of effort to control my laughter, after having listened to this incident. As the string of anecdotes unfolded, I could not help but ask, 'You are really particular about the music track that your thirty second stories unfold - tell us about how you chose the track for this ad!'

'Music comes intrinsically to Piyush and me. The track of the Fevicol Bus ad was actually inspired from an already interesting track, which was composed by ***Tohfiq.*** *He had created it for the album called Rhythm. When I was editing the film, I edited it on Tohfiq's track. It fitted beautifully. Just to reinvent it a bit, I brought Tohfiq and* ***Ehsaan*** *together; the latter picked the formers tempo and twisted it to create a new feel.'*

For me, the magic in the ads that the Pandey brothers create, is its characters, they are so real. Actual villagers journeying on a possessed bus made it a story we all can relate to; a story we all must have lived in some way or the other, in our lives and our home-towns.

From Reel to Real

It isn't always about what looks good on the reel but more so, about what is real. Characters that resonate with reality is a change that the Pandey brothers dared to bring. If we go back in time and recall the initial advertising landscape, the ads featured glamorous models, pretty looking picture-perfect people, with sophisticated dressing, living lavish lifestyles. The ambiance was always an unreal reflection of the ultimate luxuries. The ads were heavily under the influence of the western lifestyle and culture. The elements they carried, were far away from the nuances of the Indian life and realities. But eventually, the overbearing disconnect donned onto some brave creative minds and a wave of change ushered in. Fevicol ads were one of the first famous ads where normal people, people who aren't picture perfect were made protagonists; heroes of the thirty-second stories. As the conversation flowed, we began discussing one of Fevicol's early ads; one with the carpenters and the unbreakable egg.



It was probably, the first famous commercial by Prasoon Pandey. It featured normal people; people right out of our lives as the heroes. How did you manage the authenticity and realism while maintaining the humour?

Who were the carpenters in the ad? Were they actors or actual carpenters?

'It was one of the biggest and boldest decisions that we had ever taken. If I recall correctly, it was my first Fevicol ad. At the time when I got this ad, I remember seeing ads of paints, featuring a painter wearing dungarees, a painter who actually was a model and one could easily confuse him as the husband or owner of the house. He did not look like a painter! I showed the film to the clients back then and told them, "Sir humare yahan aise painter nahi hote". And then, I insisted that I wanted to cast people, who when you look at them, you can believe they are carpenters.

I feel that, we the people, who work in an air-conditioned environment, somehow, can never have that skin character, which the villagers and the people who live out there in the real terrain, possess. The client was brave enough to go with my insistence because they saw the logic in it. As their end consumers were carpenters and if we made them look real, it would help. Thus, on the casting front, only one of them is an actor, who plays the main carpenter, who attempts to break the egg. The rest were actual carpenters who worked at the set.'

Who was the actor who played the main carpenter?

*'His name is **Sitaram** and I met him in an interesting way. In reality, he wasn't an actor but he was the supplier of junior artists for one of my Kodak commercials. When we were shooting that commercial, I was trying hard to explain a junior artist, how he had to enter the frame to be the part of the picture being clicked. But somehow, I wasn't able to get through. After many repeated attempts to explain, I failed. Suddenly, Sitaram, the artist manager stepped into the scene and did what I was trying to attain perfectly and explained it to the junior artist in Marathi.*

I so liked his act, that I told my Producer ***Cyrus*** *to keep him in our contact list and that one day, I will make an entire commercial with him. And after four months, as luck would have it, the Fevicol carpenter and egg ad came up and I casted him as the protagonist. He was so happy to get the main role that he told me "Aap mereko hamesha lena" and thus, virtually he is in every Fevicol ad, playing some role or the other."*

So how did this Carpenter and egg story come about?

'The idea came from the agency but it wasn't Indianized in its make. The story that came was about a farmer, who is making an egg omelette in his wooden log hut. When he hits the egg, it doesn't break. Instead, it slips from his hand, flies out of the window and he follows it out to collect it. Then he realizes that the hen who laid the egg is eating grains from a Fevicol container. But I wasn't really convinced about this story. Because first, when you think of a farmer, the image is that of an American one appears in your mind. It sounded like a story from the Wild West. "Yeh apni kahani nai lag rahi thi". So we Indianized it, which is when the idea of featuring carpenters instead of farmers donned.

If you notice, carpenters usually live where they work. They sleep and cook there, because they have a continuous job work kind of set up, like a project. "Typical scenario hota hai - woh banyan, gamcha pehen ke kaam kar rahe hai; unki kameez keel pe tangi hai." We created the same set up, so much so, that I used the carpenters who actually worked at the sets as the part of the ad and instructed them not to wash their shirts and get the same one next day for the shoot. All these little things helped us build authenticity. Now it came to building the story.

We decided that we will not start with the unbreakable egg. We will first build a rhythm, that is, the carpenter is taking an egg and breaking it, taking the egg and breaking it and the fourth time, the egg will not break. This will make an interesting start of the story, because the sudden disruption breaks the rhythm and evokes interest. Then, we decided that once everyone is stunned, he will not give up so easily … he will try to break the egg using different techniques. Then finally, he uses a hammer to break it

and that is when the egg will slip from his hand and hit the pot and break it. "Aise kahani batayenge toh mazaa ayega".'

The breaking of the pot was the high point, and correct me if I am wrong the shot is actual no VFX, post-production or animation right?

'Yes, Absolutely! It is a real shot. Once VHQ magazine from Singapore was planning an article on post-production and they contacted us for this ad, asking how did you achieve the "pot explosion" using post-production techniques. I replied,"I am sorry to disappoint you, but the shot is real ... there is no technique used." I vouch for real because I grew up doing theatre, so we decided we will attempt to get a real shot. We made six solid eggs out of acrylic, because we knew we will require multiple takes. Now the main challenge was that the frame was tight, we needed to hit the egg at a particular spot on the pot. We had literally made a mark on the pot which was our target. We knew we will need even more pots, so we already had twelve black earthen pots all looking the same.

I have a cricket background so I decided I will attempt the throws. The first throw, was in the frame but the pot broke in two pieces. We replaced the pot. The second throw, it was in the frame, but the pot merely suffered a crack. This got me worried, because we had limited pots. So I said, turn this pot around. Finally, with the third shot and the second pot, we got it right. It was immense fun!'

And this entire action was filled in with a radio playing as the background score?

'Because, it was a real setting - everything had to be authentic. And observation told me that usually carpenters and other such similar professionals, work with a radio playing in the background. Thus, I used a radio track. But with a twist. Now for my own little fun-filled indulgence, I executed a little trick. If you carefully listen to the radio track, the RJ is announcing the names of listeners, those who have requested for a song. The names actually are a mixed bag of my own friends from the ad industry. For instance ***Kailash Surendranath*** *became* ***Kailash***

Kakkar *and* ***Prahlad Kakkar*** *became* ***Prahlad Surendranath****;* ***Ram Madhavni*** *became* ***Ram Ghoshal****, and* ***Sumantro Ghoshal*** *became* ***Sumantro Madhvani****. And the track played, "Yeh gaane ki farmaish ki hai, Patna se - Ram Ghoshal, Sumantro Madhvani, Prahlad Surendranath aur Kailash Kakkar ne." This was our own little personal joke.'*

Just like they borrowed characters from reality, the Pandey brothers also borrow anecdotes from life, those which depict the ironies and satires that exist around us. In their view, life has a unique sense of humour, which renders itself beautifully to the eyes that observe. Being the observers they are, they embed these incidents in their memories and then weave them, in their ad films. Moochowali is one such unreal story that has real anecdotes portrayed in its backdrop.

Life's sense of Humour

A girl with a moustache! A bizarre idea that unfolded as a funny story, on our television screens. Moochowali is yet another revered ad film of Fevicol, where-in an interesting idea, backed with a soulful track tickled the viewers. I speak to Prasoon Pandey; the craftsman behind this quirky ad and unearth the story of the 'Girl with a moustache'.

Moochowali, a tragedy that is funny! How did this story come about? I asked Prasoon.

To which he said, '***Kinu*** *(aka* ***Abhijit Awasthi****, NCD, Ogilvy) had written this story, but it was until her death. But somehow, I felt that there was an incomplete end to the story. So, I suggested let's take it a step further and show the character's reincarnation, where-in she is born with a moustache. With this, we got the idea ready. Now, we had to build it. To build the story, we believed that we needed to capture the plight of a girl who had moustache. "Agar ek ladki ki vakai mein mooch ho, toh baaki log kaise react karenge". Thus, as a kid, everyone keeps staring at her and she gives them all a dirty look. Then as a young girl, she goes to a photo studio to click her picture with a cut out of a boy. But the photographer looks at her in disgust, reverses the cut-out and clicks her photo with a girl. Then comes her wedding time. Here, we got thinking, as to who would marry a girl with a moustache! So we brought in a cock-eyed boy. This way, her story reaches to her deathbed.*

She is in the hospital to make this shot interesting. I added one of my personal experiences of life. When I was a kid ,I had gone to a hospital in Jaipur, to see my ailing aunt and I was shocked to see the dichotomy of life - wherein on one side, I see my paralyzed aunt and behind her bed, I see an ailing man who is playing cards with his caretaker. I found this amazing - playing cards to pass time in a hospital; whilst there are some who are fighting for life. I truly like to include such layers to my film. Thus, actually when Moochowali dies in the hospital, the camera moves and we see two individuals, who are playing cards. The point here is, as ad film makers, we don't create anything new! We take from life and put a frame around it and then, we ask people to enjoy it!'

What gives further depth to the story of Moochowali is its track, tell us how did you zero on to the music track?

'Being a story of reincarnation, I felt that the story needed a spiritual track. Thus, I started listening to various folk tracks which are spiritual. Being a story of reincarnation, I felt we humans have a very little role to play. Off the many I heard, I stumbled upon a famous Gujarati track and found it amazing. We called the singer and asked if he could sing for us. . He was a purist; a man surrendered to God and thus, he completely

shunned us and the idea of singing for us. "Usne humein daant lagayi aur bhaga diya". But I was hooked on to the idea of a spiritual track and thus, got thinking as to what to do? So I caught hold of my sister Ila (Ila Arun), who was in Delhi. She writes very well. I gave her some words and she said that based on it, she would figure something out. In a short while, she called me back and gave me two lines written in Hindi, which read - "Mein sochu ki mein hi karta hoon par karta hai koi aur".

Post this, I called another Gujarati singer I knew, and asked him to first convert these lines into Gujarati and format it into a composition. The track though was done by ***Dhruv Ghanekar*** *(music director) later. We recorded the track in the Gujarati singer's voice but I found it to be too heavy and powerful. It was overbearing on the film; the voice. I wanted a softer voice.*

Being a music enthusiast, I used to religiously follow the singing show 'Sa re ga ma pa Lil Champs' which was aired on Zee TV. The show brought forth India's best talent and in the show, was a little boy called ***Hemant Brijwasi*** *who I loved. In one of the episodes he had sung the song 'Saware', on hearing him sing it I had cried. After that, I wanted him to sing for the Moochowali film. We called up Zee and they agreed. Back then, Dhruv used to record in BlueFrog. So, we called Hemant there, he came with a Zee representative.*

I had assumed that he being so young and naïve, would be intimidated by the setup but on the contrary he was rather confident. He sat down comfortably and then I told him that I will first show you the film and then, I will make you listen to the track. That you have to sing the same, because we think your voice is correct for it. He patiently sat through the film and at the end broke into a loud laughter. "Woh thahaka marke hansa" and then, what he said about the film touched my heart and encouraged me as a filmmaker for this ad film. He said, "Kyunki is mein comedy bhi hai aur dard bhi hai".

A kid possessing such a deep thought stunned me, he completely understood that I was trying to tell a sad story lightly. Post this, he went in for recording. He started "Mein sochu ke mein hi karu se ... par ...". At this section he stopped and told Dhruv, "Yeh mere liye ek note high hai, please isko ek

note neeche kardo"', Dhruv is like are you sure, ek baar koshish nahin karni. So he replied, "Nahin sir, mujhe samajh mein aa gaya" and then, he just sang flawlessly. Without reaching any peak yet, he knew his strengths and was so confident. This is one of the most memorable incidents attached to the Moochowali ad.'

It is when the intrigue of real life, the imagination of reel life and the magic of music infuse into one, that the resultant is a story that sticks. The amount of detailing that goes in making these films into loved stories is immense; right from the characterization to locations, everything is well thought and planned. You have a product like Fevicol Marine which is a highly functional commodity; a glue whose bond remains intact in water also. An industrial commodity like this can also have a story which is so fascinating; this is an art I adore.

A happy go lucky Bengali man rowing his boat across the river, carrying a heap of chairs, suddenly finds a pretty village girl asking for lift. He stops and then kicks off the chairs from the boat to make space for her. Then you build the tension, for she isn't alone; she has a goat, anda bundle of grass. So, the man keeps making space by kicking off chairs one after the other. Finally, she boards, with all her stuff and his romantic song continues, making his journey even more beautiful. The chairs brave the river without any breakage; a point where the product's relevance surfaces seamlessly.

How did you ensure that this story would stick?

'When we finalized the story, I was keen to shoot it in a location which enabled me to show something new on the screen. Thus, Madhya Pradesh as a location occurred to me. Visually, it is a very interesting place - you have the Sangemarmar rocks and I thought a complimenting track would hold the film. But keeping Madhya Pradesh as the location was an idea, attached to two major issues. First, being that during the recce, my team found that the shoot cannot happen in the river, because the current is too strong and we needed to stop the boat, which wouldn't be possible. The second issue was that I heard a lot of Madhya

Pradesh originated music tracks, but none matched the lilting feeling of a slow rowing boat. Thus, we went with the next best option, given the film a Bengal feel.'

Once you finalized on Bengal, what detailing did you work on?

'First I heard a Bengali track which I loved. It had a happy and lazy mood. So I decided, that this will be the mood of the film. Now, the next step was to fashion the actors into characters, which would take the viewer in the Bengal zone - like the man's hair has a center parting. At this point Pops, I would like to share a very interesting anecdote with you, which involves you!'

Involves me?

'Yes! In the story, the girl is from a village ... from Bengal. Now, we had to design her wardrobe and costumes accordingly. So I told my costume team to work on it. But initially, they came back with typically those Bollywoodish, over-dressed looking, village girl concept. I realized that they were completely off track. What they needed was strong reference, in form of a visual, which will make it clear as to what I am looking for. This is where you feature Pops! I went to your website and pulled out one of your paintings, that of a village girl who was wearing a yellow outfit. Her hair-plait comes forward. I showed the painting to my costume design team and asked them to base the look on this. So, you are to be given credit here!'

Thank you! Then finally where did you shoot and what happened?

'We finally shot at seventy kilometers from Jaipur. There is a dam. It one of the deepest man-made lakes, with a depth of 700 feet. Thus, if you see in the film, the man is stopping his boat with a bamboo. Well, that is a trick, just to add a little drama. We used the shot where he puts a break on his rowing boat by using the bamboo. But in reality, we are actually pulling the boat from behind, to put it to a halt. It was an exciting shoot.

We used to live on the banks of that lake, shoot in the early morning, then take a break in the afternoon and actually go off to sleep in the same boats. Once the sun was mild, we used to get back to work.'

Yet another ad-film done by Prasoon, which was inspired from a real life incident, is the 8 PM whiskey ad, where two soldiers share a peg of whiskey across the border. The ad emanated a certain warmth and satire, which was truly loved.

How did 8 PM happen?

'Pops since independence, we have had only two wars. Thus, most of the time, our soldiers are in a non-war space. They are on duty, but there is no war going on. Thus, each day, they see each other and eventually, they become friends. Once I was told, that a soldier wanted to light a cigarette and he did not have a match-stick. So, he quite casually asked his counterpart on the other side to lend a matchbox, and he did. This little incident that I heard, left me pleasantly surprised. It stayed in my head. I could not believe that we are countries at war, but the reality has its own sense of humour. Thus, when I was approached by the client to create an ad for their Rum. It struck me that army-men drink a lot of rum, due to the climate they live in. At the same time, we as India had tested a missile; in response the neighbouring country had tested a missile. Thus, I made this ad film as my own personal reaction to the status quo then.

I wrote it and showed it to my client who really loved the idea and said, "Yaar yeh toh badiya ... bahut badiya hai! Meri rum will not do justice to it. I have a bigger budget to advertise my premium product 8 PM whiskey. Will this idea work for 8 PM? I was thrilled and said sure it would! This is how 8 PM was made.'

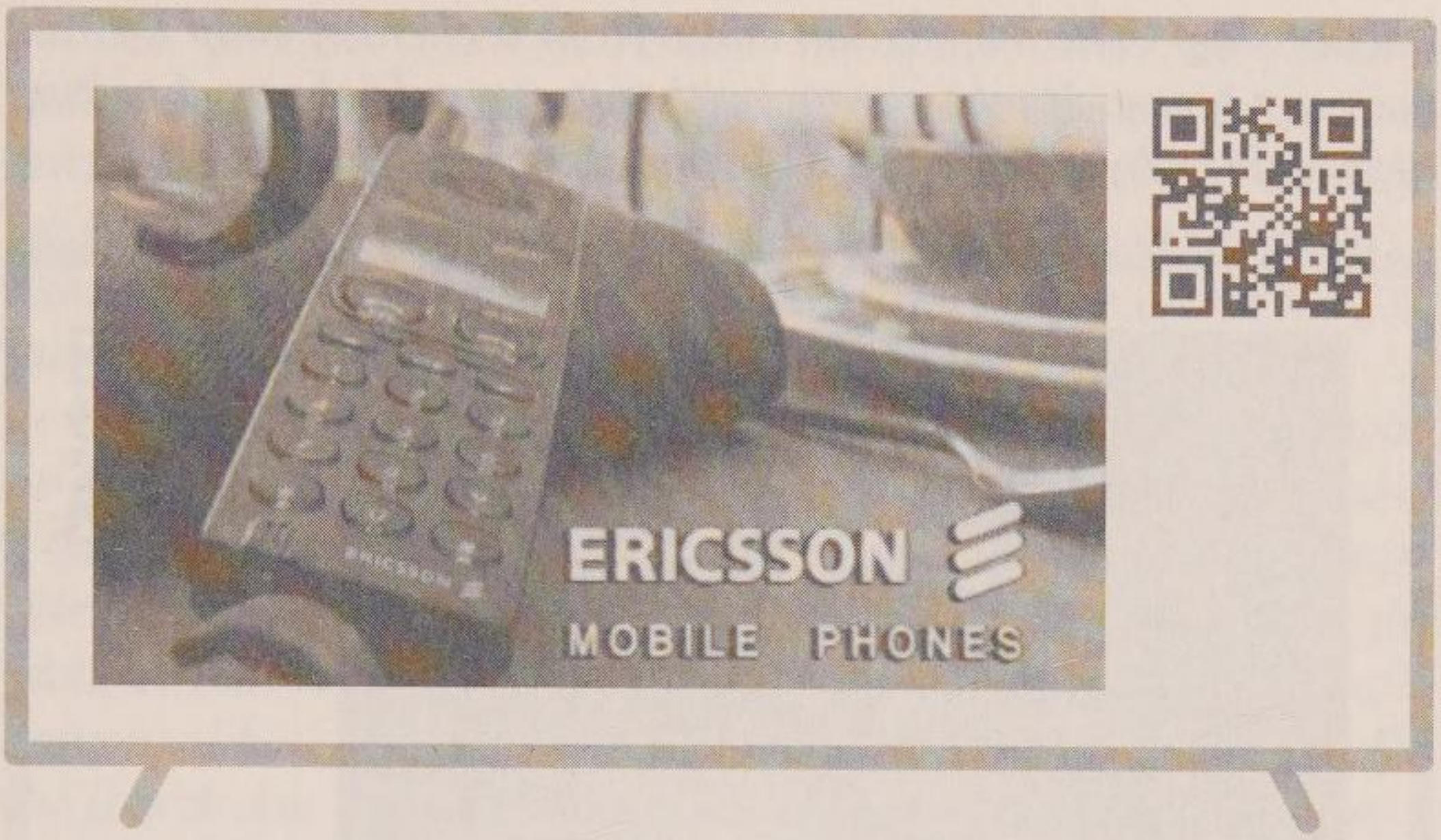
Similarly, the ad for Sony Ericsson mobile phone was based on a funny insight borrowed from life. When the client had approached Prasoon, they had three propositions - the smallest phone, the toughest phone and one-hand

operation. They sought to make an ad, on either of these features of the phone. Toughest was ruled out as an option, because Motorola had already done a brilliant ad on the same lines. The one-hand operation, Prasoon felt, was too complicated for the audience. Thus, the option left was the smallest phone.

Prasoon tell me how did this quirky idea come about?

'They had sent me scripts for the smallest phone, wherein bikini clad models walk the ramp and remove phones form their two-piece. As a creative guy, I saw no sense in this idea. So I communicated my point of view to the client and they said, why don't you write one? Thus, this ad is written by Piyush. We were on a holiday and that is when my father-in-law had made a very interesting comment. He had said, creative people don't belong to any company. They only belong to this very large organization called Creativity. Although Piyush wasn't officially involved with the project, he had helped me. The story happened when the two of us were at Narayan Nivas; a small hotel right by our house in Rajasthan, where we went to have a beer, as a ritual.

We wrote the commercial there. It all germinated from the insight of life, that when a man turns fifty, he begins having all these hidden desires and he begins lusting. When we are young, we are more honest in our relationships. But as we grow older, we start to become more layered. In the beginning, we had decided, that it will be a twenty second ad. But we made it a thirty seconder, because I wanted that suspense to be built tactfully. It starts with a pretty lady talking. He assumes that the talk is addressed to him. Being alone in absence of his wife, the idea is tempting. So he gets up and walks towards her. The lady mistakes him to be the waiter and says "One black coffee please". At the same time, we also reveal the phone. When this happens, his world comes to a standstill. This was a long shot, so as to communicate the impact. ***Kamal Chopra*** *was the fifty year old in the ad film.*



While the Pandey brothers borrow from life, they also give the world interesting stories. Often, when they write a film, it is supported with a strong, highly imaginative back-story. It is a thought, which leads to the thirty-second magic. They literally etch out an imaginative life of their characters, just to ensure that it culminates into a beautiful short story. I probe into the story behind back-stories.

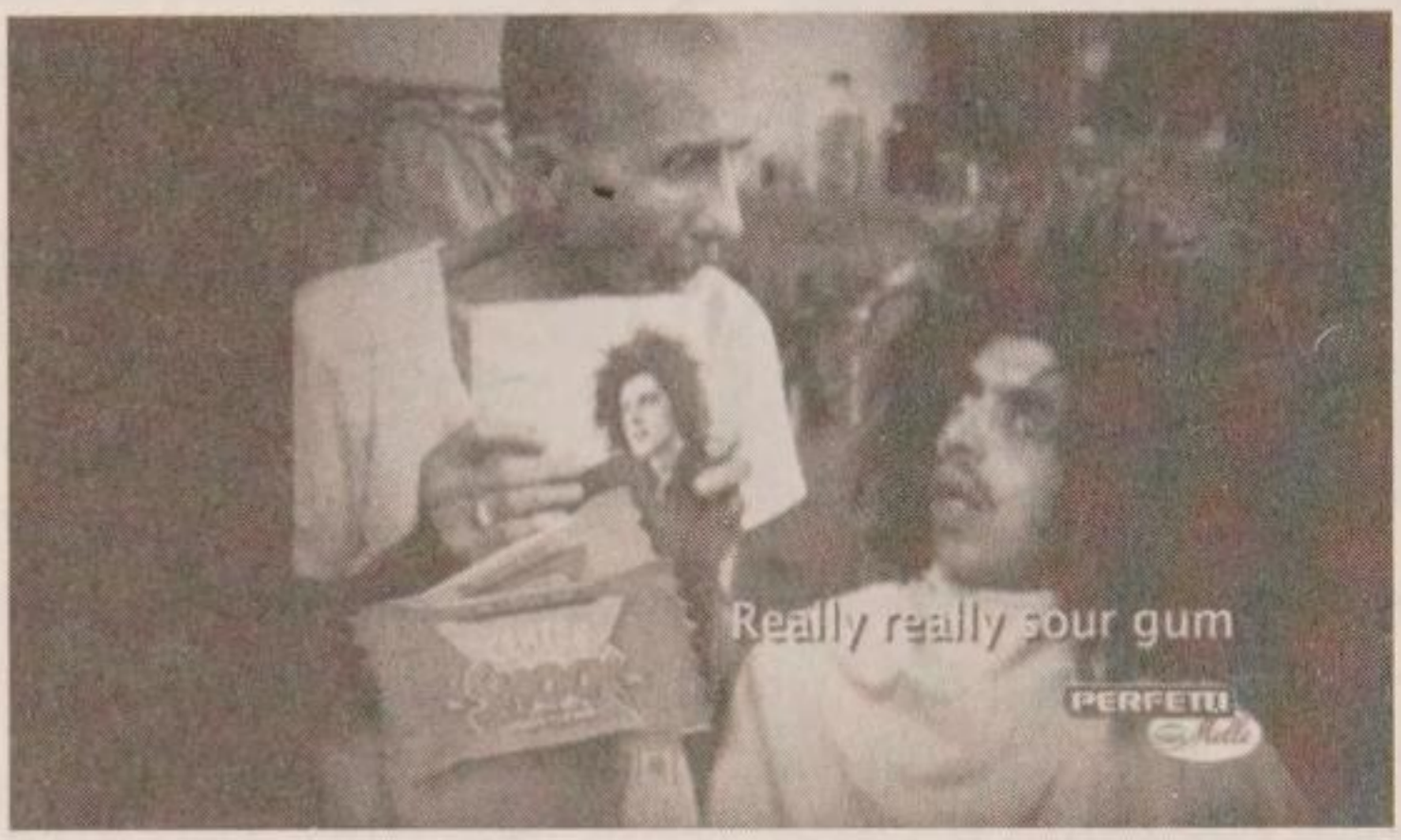
The Back-story of a Story

'You know Pops, what is interesting about creating these thirty seconds stories?It is the liberty that we take, to let our imagination go beyond just that time frame. Each time, I think of an ad film idea - I build a back-story to it and try to create a unique one - a "once upon a time" and in my imagination, I paint the origins of the characters, their history and what their life is about?" Prasoon Pandey said as we continued our conversation.'

Share some interesting back-stories of your ad-films and how were they weaved in your thirty second frame?

'One of the most imaginative back stories I had, was for the first ever Perfetti ad film of Centre Shock chewing gum. It was about this guy, who comes to a barber-shop for a peculiar haircut, which is achieved through Centre Shock. I indulged a lot when it comes to this commercial. First of all, I started with the

barber shop. The inspiration came from a chemist shop located near my house. It was a shop, with a pretty odd shape. Looking at it, I felt why I can't think of something like this?



At that moment I called ***Susanne,*** *who was the art director and told her that today, we will do a different exercise. I gave her a chart paper, and she was like, "you know I can't draw!". I said, "Don't worry, I don't need you to display your drawing skills. I just want you to listen to a story. Once, there was a man who owned a shop of Homeopathy medicines. Design this shop for me first, on this chart paper". Listening to my little story she began her work. She researched about old Homeopathy shops, and after a while, came back with a layout drawn on the chart-paper.*

Then, I continued my back-story and told her, that now this Homeopathy shop-owner has a useless son, who isn't going to do much in his life. So his father decided to cut a part of his shop and give it to his son to run as a barber shop. So Susanne was all irritated. She said, "You should have said this first!" But I anyways cajoled her to give it a try. She came back with some cutting but the issue was that it was still looking like a Homeopathy shop; not a barber shop. That is when I realized, that my brief was incorrect. So, I tweaked my story a bit and told her - the farther grows old and dies. So, the son has decided to change his Homeopathy shop into a barber shop. But he also is a bit emotional, about the place being his dads, so he decides, "Ki papa ki gaddi wala area rakhna

hai" He does not want to remove the space where his father's Indian seating was setup), Susanne was like you are driving me crazy Prasoon. I told her, this will be the last exercise. Finally, we got the awkward shape I wanted. Now we came to the point to execute the film. I was a bit apprehensive because of the kind of humour, the film was made up of.

The idea was, that a man comes into the barber-shop, wherein, he shows the barber, the crazy cut that he wants. The barber sees it and then gives him the sweet. He eats the sweet; gets a high intensity shock and his hair becomes exactly like the one in the picture, that he carried. Four days before the shoot I was really nervous, I had a feeling it wouldn't turn out to be a good film. On the fourth day I stumbled upon the solution to my apprehension.

Originally in the script, when the man shows the barber, the picture of the hairstyle he wants, the audience too, can see the picture. I decided that when he shows the barber the picture, we won't reveal it to the audience. . I believed, that for this film to work, what we needed was a poker-faced comedy. Wherein, the barber is extremely serious about his job. He has no clue that this is some kind of humour. The man shows him the picture very seriously. The barber sees it and does not react. Both keep a complete poker face and that is how the story unfolds. The twist seemed interesting. So, the next step was to find the apt poker faces. For the role of the barber, we chose ***Honey Shahi*** *who was brilliant at his job. As for the guy who comes in for a haircut, I had a special requirement, "Mujhe ek bakad aadmi chahiye tha".*

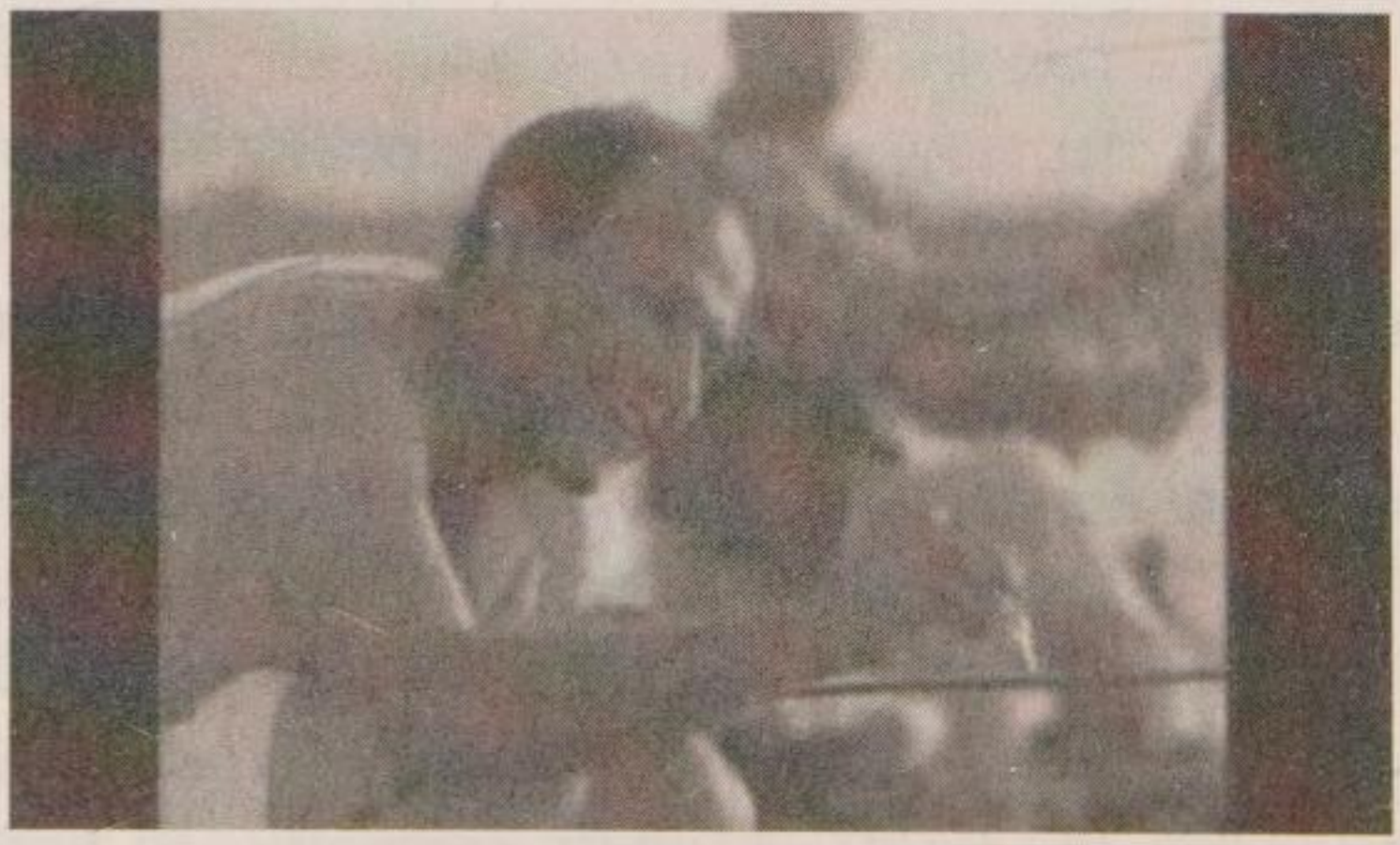
Bakad?

'In Rajasthani, we call an extremely strange and weird looking guy "Bakad". I wanted a guy, who would never cast in a commercial. So, I instructed the casting team to get me the profiles of people, whom we often reject. But the casting team said that the people that are rejected, we don't keep their records. Then I asked Cyrus to do one thing; call the boy who used to assist me with the lights. I avidly remembered that he was a pure "Bakad". The advantage was, that as a director, I was not required to tell him to look strange. He was strange.

He came and I asked him, if he wants to act in a commercial? He readily agreed. We began shooting. Now, the issue was that the guy was a complete non-actor. Thus, if we would tell him to act in a particular way, he would not be able to do so. So, I thought of an idea. I installed a one-way mirror and behind the mirror I placed the camera. So he could not see us behind the mirror. But we could see and capture him. He came, sat on the chair, unaware that we were rolling. We left him there, with no one around. He waited … but no one turned up. Bored, he started making faces looking into the mirror. He was checking himself out and we captured these shots. As for the blur, we asked him to shake his head and then, rolled it up to eight frames to get the speed.'

But the clients, were they fine with featuring a 'Bakad' guy?

'Pops, I played a little trick here! We had done his screen test, but I decided not to show the screen-test to the clients. His screen test was awful and I knew the clients would freak out, looking at it. I asked my production team to tell the client, that he is a very busy guy, and we just have his stills. What added to the humour and enhanced it was the track we attached to the film. ***Chetan Shashital*** *did an outstanding job on the sound. We wanted something very unique to be played in the background, when he crazily shakes his head. We were thinking, as to what kind of sound should it be!*



That is when Chetan said, that he will take care of it, as the sound will be like that of Baboons mating. The film was aired and it became an instant hit. After six months of the ad film being aired, an interesting incident happened. I was driving at Peddar road, when one of the producers, MP, who I knew very well, overtook me. He had a red Mercedes back then. Next to MP, I saw him sitting (the bakad guy of center shock); his name was ***Varun****. They went ahead and did not notice me. Both our cars stopped at the Cadbury house signal; There were two cars in between ours.*

At the same time a man came to my car, he was selling small helicopters. He knocked at my window. I lowered it and he asked if I would buy the copter. I asked him the price. He quoted Rs. 300. I bought it and decided to execute a small prank. I asked the guy who was selling the helicopter to take the one that I had purchased, and give it to the guy sitting in the red Mercedes in the passenger seat. On handing over the copter, he was to say – "Sir aapko TV pe dekha tha. Kamaal ho aap! Yeh aapke liye … meri taraf se!" (Sir, I saw you on TV. Your performance was brilliant. This is a gift from me.) After this, he immediately called me and said, "Prasoon, you don't know what you have done to my career! People are recognizing me on the road and giving me helicopters for free." I was laughing all the while, it was fantastic!'

Any other back-story waale stories?

'Pops, we had thought of a small back-story for Fevikwik. The initial story was that, a man comes to a lake, puts four dots of Fevikwik on a stick, dips the stick into the water and catches the fishes. But I felt it was very bland. I wanted to add some suspense to it. So we decided, that first, we will show a man who is fishing the traditional way. He has the entire paraphernalia. Next to him, there is huge pile of orange peels, which indicates he has been there, for quite a while and yet, he hasn't been able to catch a single fish. We decided to make this character resemble a sophisticated Englishman. Suddenly a villager enters the scene. He is seen wearing a lungi, singing and lost in his own world.

He is not a show off. He doesn't even tease the Englishman. We characterized him to be a simpleton, who is on a mission.

His back-story is that his wife, who is dominating, has ordered him to go to the lake and get four fishes. Like an obedient husband, he has come to execute his wife's order. These back-stories are very important. Thus, we decided on important aspects like - where is he from. He is from the South, because I believed it would add a different flavour to the film. Then someone objected that people won't understand the counting, to which I argued that the audience will understand the counting through his act! We needed to understand that he wasn't counting for us; but for himself. He comes to the bank singing, settles and counts till four in Kannada. In between, the Englishman interferes and scolds him, for making noise, as it would distract the fishes. This we purposely added, because I believed that with this scolding, the audience will be able to savour the villager's victory more. This is how the story unfolds.'

I believe there is an actual back-story to this ad film, wherein Piyush conducted an experiment?

'Yes Pops! That is a very interesting anecdote. When Piyush came about with this idea, he wanted to make sure the glue works in water. So he dropped a coin inside a glass of water, applied Fevikwik at the end of a tooth-pick and dipped the tooth-pick into the glass. Apparently, the coin did stick to the tooth-pick. Also let me share a small secret with you, in reality we had tied the fishes to the rod because when we stuck the fishes to the stick, the scales would peel off from its body and remain stuck to the stick; while the fish would come off loose. So we used this little trick.'

As I explored the varied hues of humour in advertising, I came across ads that made me laugh out loud and ads which simply bought a serene smile, onto my face. We have all loved the plethora of humour, ads have brought to us. Those small dosage of entertainment, sometimes, have been sarcastic, sometimes slapstick and sometimes, weirdly deep. In this collage of light-heartedness, there lives a spectacle – The "Happy Dent Ad".

An Enlightened Entertainment

Its genesis was a weird idea – 'Human light bulb'. Its charm lay in its storytelling - 'One of the important human bulb is late to work'. Its beauty - the backdrop of a kingly Indian royalty lit by human bulbs. Its aha effect was an overlay of a spiritual track – "Tera dil roshan, tera mann roshan, toh jahan roshan" which are the profound lyrics of Prasoon Joshi, all this for a chewing gum that brightens your teeth. Prasoon Joshi, the man behind this brilliant idea and Ram Madhvani the man behind its dutiful execution, took me through the varied layers of this spectacle.

The most unique aspect about this ad is its very simple and quirky thought, 'a human bulb getting late for work'. This bold and innovative idea was **Prasoon's** brain-child. The key is, that even a product as simple and common as chewing gum can be weaved in a story which sticks. Prasoon's bent towards being different made him think about this quirk. It is this insightful idea that laid a strong foundation for an ad, which became an internationally revered piece of art. The ad pushed Indian advertising to a new stature and thus left a mark on the global map of creativity. It is Prasoon's creative brilliance wherein he picked up a simple life crisis, 'getting late for work', a quirky character 'a human light bulb', an exotic

setting 'the Indian royalty' and a profound philosophy 'the Sufi words' and weaved them together to create a message of 'enlightenment' as 'brightened minds and souls' and tied it to a product which would brighten your teeth. While the ad-man in Prasoon hit a masterstroke, the poet in him pushed the envelope further with his decorated words.

'Tera dil roshan, tera mann roshan, to jahan roshan' these beautiful lyrics, reveal Prasoon's Sufism and his innate need for being profound. The idea was to weave, 'bright' in the story and create a track which does justice to this quirky idea. Thus the poetic equivalent to bright, 'roshan' became the anchor of the ad.

Apart from thinking of a brilliant idea and inking soulful lyrics Prasoon leveraged the power of partnership. He picked and chose the talent he felt would do justice to the concept – Ram Madhvani, who when we met said, "*Happy Dent, is Prasoon Joshi's brilliance and it is his conviction that resulted in such an epic ad*".

We spoke to Ram, who took us through the execution process starting with the very foundation, the very basics as to whom this ad is made for, '*My target audience is my aunt from Indore; a normal person who knows nothing about the art of advertising or Cannes. So one thing, that we never lost sight of while making this ad was our audience. Of-course most of Happy Dent is Prasoon Joshi. He is the key person behind this idea. It all unfolded, when Prasoon and I were shooting for another commercial, with* ***Saif Ali Khan*** *and* ***Rani Mukherjee****. He just shared the idea and we had a little discussion around it. He indicated that he would talk to some international directors for this film, as he was a bit apprehensive about getting it done in India.*

At that moment, I put across a straightforward question, "May I pitch for it? Let me come back to you with some mood-boards (Story-boards – basic sketches of images)" I suggested so, because our discussion back then, was just about images. Images of an usher in, in a theatre, holding a boy. The boy is his torch, a kid under a human-lamp, a guy chiseling by using the light of a human bulb. I then submitted twelve to fifteen images, which also included the human chandelier. To visualize it was a

great challenge! Prasoon went through them and various reasons added up together, resulting in the ad coming my way.

Until then, the film was supposed to be a montage film. But both of us, wanted to venture out of the montage space. We knew that a montage film, with a background track is a short-cut when it comes to advertising. Moreover, our audience i. e. "My aunt from Indore" loves stories. Indians love stories. We were constantly racking our brains, as to how to make a story of this? We were travelling together for a shoot and kept pondering over this question in the car, followed by the airport. As the discussion continued, at the airport, Prasoon suddenly said, "The man who is meant to be in the Chandelier … is late! Before sundown, he has to get to the chandelier … but something has happened to him and he is late." This became the foundation of a story now. We had to find answers to varied questions, related to the narrative; starting from, "Why is he late?"'

How did you find his reason for being late?

'Pops, my brother had bought a fancy cycle; we used to go travelling from Worli sea-face to his office! His office was in Prabhadevi and one day, when he was cycling, his front wheel came off. This is where we got our answer! We found this to be an interesting reason. We all know what to say and how to say it - the more important aspect here was, as to what we want to make our audience feel. This ad was a blend of two moods - which we in India, call Ras; adbhut ras and hasya ras were two moods we wanted to weave into the story. The adbhut ras we wanted to communicate through the visual elements, that would create a sense of wonder.

Then came the story, it was a narration of the boy, who loses his cycle wheel. He parks his cycle, passes varied places and reaches a palace, where there is a king who is heading for his dinner. This story, I was discussing with my team and back then, I had a director ***Milind*** *working with us. I shared the entire narrative with him, wherein the time was almost after sundown. He then added, that why not make it a narrative which is a montage film. He suggested that we do not start with light everywhere. We*

begin with a bit of daylight and then, when we reach the climax, we see light everywhere. This gave a good structure to the story.'

You talked about adbhut ras, wherein you talked about visual delight. The visual element of this film is the era it is placed in; the old royal India. How did that come about?

'When I was creating images for the ad, post freezing on the story and the structure, I had one thing embedded in my mind. I wanted to keep this ad Indian. In no ways, did I want to give in to any western nuances. Thus, when I was speaking to Prasoon, I told him that this ad will unfold in the era of British raj meeting the princely India. That era has always fascinated me. Also there is a photographer, whose work I deeply admire. His name is ***Lala Deen Dayal*** *also known as* ***Raja Deen Dayal****. I have been growing up with his work. He is a black and white photographer from the late 1800's. I took a lot of references from his work.* ***Chetan Sharma*** *from Animagic helped me create brilliant illustrations. Whenever I have a tough story-board to do, , he is the one I go to. Although he isn't a storyboard artist, he is one of India's great-animated filmmaker! British raj meeting princely India, had to be a land, where it felt, as if light did not exist and in a time, where the regular lights had not been invented.*

The catch here was, the more ridiculous an idea, the more real you are to make it. For instance, the nuances of the light – if it is a street light, how does it illuminate vis-à-vis a table lamp. We also worked on the characters. For instance, Prasoon and I were wondering, if we should keep the king to be an eight year old. For a long while, we had meant to cast a spoilt eight-year old maharaja. But as we proceeded with the ad, discussing each aspect at length, we zeroed onto casting an old guy. That is how we weaved the story and the setting, making it Indian, because of my own wanting to make it Indian!'

How did you manage to create those human bulbs?

'Since school, I was interested and fascinated with the Malkhambh poses. I knew to achieve the human bulbs in varied ways; the art would prove to be handy. Thus, we called for Malkhambh

experts from Maharashtra and Kerala. At the end, we had about thirty people, who were a part of the final team.'

Where did you shoot it?

'Panvel. In Panvel, there is a basic shell of a palace, which then can be designed as per one's requirements. We created an elaborate set in that shell. The added beauty or I would rather say the cherry on the cake of this ad, was its back-ground track. Thanks to Prasoon for the lyrics. He has a poet's mind and a poet's mind only talks in metaphors. Thus, he has the knack of saying things in a fableistic and fantastical way, giving way to "Tera dil roshan, tera mann roshan toh jahaan roshan". It was a Sufi song; ***Shantanu Moitra*** *was the music director and* ***Kailash Kher*** *sung it. When we were recording for this song. I was also parallelly working with* ***Vishal-Shekhar*** *in the same studio for something else, and was constantly juggling between the two rooms. At one point Vishal-Shekhar came to see what was the buzz, happening in the other room.*

When they figured out what was going on, they said no matter what we want to be a part of this film. So, they decided to give the claps for the quawaalli part. So the claps you hear in the track, are given by Vishal-Shekhar. The amazing thing is that it was not a film that came from a particular agency or a production house. It came from India and the work was about collective pride; this is us! Everyone was proud to be a part of it.'

Who was the Art-Director and Director of Photography?

'The art director was ***Sunny Unnwala.*** ***Anil Mehta*** *was* Director of Photography. *There is a lot of post-production work, which has gone behind this film.'*

The amount of detailing that has gone behind this film, gives me a hunch that plenty of times you must have gone out of the way, to create realism and thus, brilliance! Share some such out- of-the-way efforts that you put in?

'When I began working for this ad, I had maintained a tedious location file. My team had visited varied places and brought

back pictures of locations. In that file, I had a picture of a bridge which was somewhere outside of Bengal. The moment I saw that bridge, I knew I wanted it to be a part of the ad. But we were shooting in Panvel, so we went out of the way, and actually built a similar looking bridge at the location of our shoot. We literally have story-boarded and drawn each aspect of this ad, right from how the cycle will be, to the bridge, the gates, the poses of the malkhambh performers, the costumes and the characters. We had also planned to have a train in the ad, andhad finalised it. But then, ***Mani Ratnam*** *hired that train for the "Chaiyan-Chaiyan" song in Dil Se.'*

While we were talking about all this, Ram took me through a fat file that he had maintained; one that contained each and every element of the ad, sketched to perfection. The thrill that we enjoy in the time span of thirty seconds or more, is actually a culmination of immense research and detailing. This reinforces my belief in the necessary madness that we creative guys suffer from.

And what did all this detailing lead to?

'Pops, ***Sameer Juneja*** *from Happy Dent used to call me, to wish me every Diwali; like all of my other clients. When he called this time, i. e. , after the ad was aired, he told me they had to set up an entirely new factory, because after the ad, the stocks ran out and they were given money to build a new factory. The faith and energy that Sameer possesses, makes him really unique. We were meant to do a sixty second film, but at the end, it came to be about an eighty-four seconder. So, we presented the eight-four first as usual. Then Sameer said, I don't want to see the sixty seconder, I'm running the eighty-four seconder.*

They chose a weekend. Back then, I think ***Bunty*** *and* ***Babli*** *was releasing and they only ran it Saturday and Sunday. On Monday, I had a meeting with Ogilvy for Vodafone and I had no clue what had transcended over the weekend. When I walked in the corridor of Ogilvy office, I had people standing up and clapping in Ogilvy. I couldn't believe it - it was a great feeling.'*

Now tell us some jaw dropping and interesting anecdotes about this ad and it's behind the scenes?

'The chandelier was a matter of deep engineering. There are twenty or twenty-four people, making a chandelier, which is about two tonnes of weight. So, we had an engineer, who understood the science of such an art and made it possible. The chandelier, because of the two tonnes of weight, we did it in a studio and not at the location. Rest, all the lights, like the street-light and all, they were executed on the location. So we had a structure made of rods and the Malkhambh artists had to hold on to the rods, wearing the dhoti, paghadi and chandelier kind of clothes, which we had made out of flexible materials to ensure comfort. So the entire execution of the chandelier was a herculean task.

Another interesting story is related to the lady, who is shown playing tennis in the film. We wanted to cast someone who knows how to play tennis. We were auditioning and this lady came up. We found her right for the part, and asked her if she knew lawn tennis. She said yes and we casted her. Well, we realized later, that she didn't know. But her not knowing also worked out well for the film. Also the protagonist of the film; the light bulb who gets late, was an actor, and he actually learnt Malkhambh to execute that single pose.'

Indian advertising has been praised for its idea and stories but often, has been criticised for its execution capabilities. But then, ads like Happy Dent break that myth and create a benchmark. It is because of ads like these, that India has been place on the global map. When we talk of ads that have struck a chord internationally, and have humour as its key ingredient, I am compelled to borrow a phenomena from my own library of work – The St. Gobain Clear Glass ad.

Clearly Comic

A film, which simply uses situational comedy, in its simple raw form! An African woman, with a bucket of water, charging towards two Chinese men, who are having lunch at a restaurant. At first, they flinch and as she nears and throws

the bucket of water onto them, they almost fall off their chairs. A huge splash and suddenly the Chinese men and the audience, both realize that there lies a glass in middle, which she begins cleaning. A comedy of errors - that surely made everyone laugh.

St. Gobain 'African woman' ad film is one of my best campaigns I believe. Back in 2000, when I was working at Lowe Lintas & Partners, we were to launch St. Gobain glass. This was a time, when glass was viewed as a commodity and the Indian glass market was primitive and inferior in quality. In a space and time like this, St. Gobain, which is one of the largest glass manufacturers wanted to launch itself. We were required to communicate the international credentials of St. Gobain as a brand. Resources were limited and the task at hand was huge; in that limited band-width, we were expected to create an ad film which possessed and international look and feel. Further, to convert the commodity; glass into an element which every man, woman and child in the country could connect to. We realized that to accomplish this, we needed a simple yet relatable story.

Owing to the resources limitation, we chose a location close to home – we shot the film at Renaissance Hotel in Powai, Mumbai. As for the cast, we had local Chinese extras and the dynamic lady was a visiting carpet exporter from Africa; someone who was merely staying at the hotel. She wasn't even an actor. Thanks to Ram Madhwani; the director, this became an achievable feat. We found the African lady at the hotel and felt, that she was perfect for the part. I met her and cordially asked, if she could be a part of this film and she happily obliged without asking for a penny; for the sake of an experience. Her dynamism and presence brought a lot of realism to the film. It was amazing fun to work with her. Unfortunately, she passed away recently.

One thing that really struck me, when Ram shared the Happy Dent experience, was his need to Indianize ads. When you put a little of us in the ads, they become a part of our lives. An example of humour and entertainment combined with the essence of being Indian, is the series of the Mc Donald ads.

I'm loving it!

Crafted to communicate the "Happy Price Menu" aspect of Mc Donalds, the ad campaign "Purane Zamane ke Daam" came into being a campaign that gained great popularity. As an advertiser, you often find yourself in a fix, when you have to say the same thing differently. Yet again, for Mc Donalds, we had communicated the value proposition, the aspect of being affordable in a way that it makes people feel good. We had two audiences - to cater to the young, who feel that they are going to a place which isn't cheap but value-for-money and also, for the old, who often reminiscence their days of black and white. Since ages, each of us have heard our elders; our parents say the dialogue "Hamare zamane mein toh" (During our times).

A dialogue that beholds the joy and nostalgia of old times, times when things were simpler, things were easy to avail. Often, we have heard in these dialogues, of prices being quoted; prices that made you realize it was a different era and most of the times, the dialogue has irked the young. When I tell my daughter that my pocket money used to be Rs. 5, I remember somewhere, a tale of the time when my father used to admonish me and say that his pocket money used to be two and half anna. Well, I am sure he must have heard

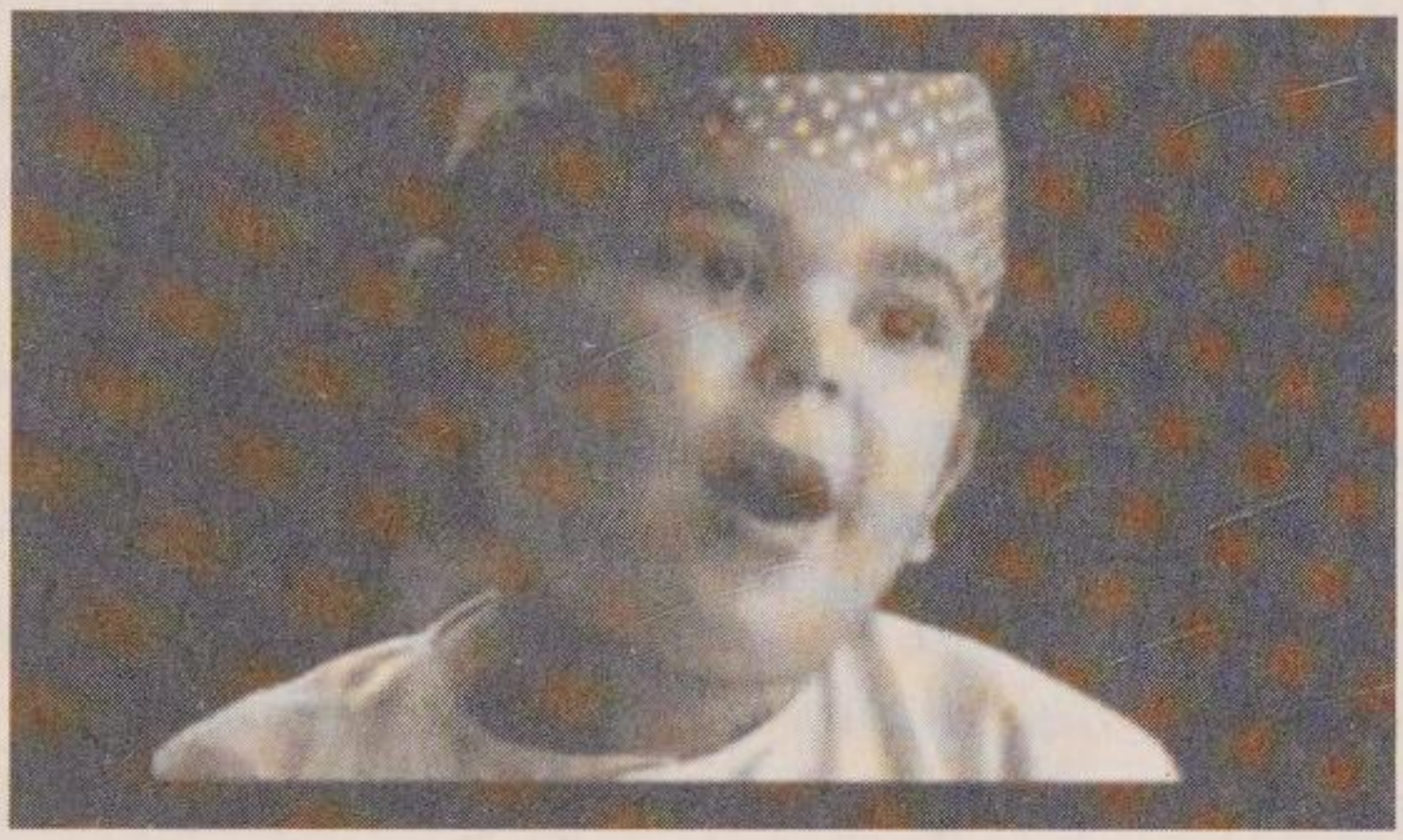
something similar from his father. It is hence, a chain that has been unknowingly running, like an undeclared tradition. But while we say the irksome dialogue to our children, with a layer or irritation, there exists a layer of imagination. There are times when they listen with amazement, when I would tell them that during my days, I could relish two puris and a cup of tea for just ten Paisa as my breakfast. When I started riding a motorcycle, petrol cost was Rs 1.25. While they hate the narration of the old times, they love the prices and hope that it were a reality even today. Each one of us secretly wish that such prices do prevail. It is upon this secret wish that we weaved a story on to.

Kaushik and Agnello were a part of the campaign. So we thought about "Purane zamane ke daam". Now we wanted to say, that the prices are so tempting, that even the dead would rise from the grave to buy at such prices. So, to portray that, we chose to showcase the look-a-likes of veteran actors like Dilip Kumar, Dev Anand, Sanjeev Kumar and Raj Kapoor. Now, the interesting thing about the making of this ad is, that all the five actors were enacted by just one man. We had one actor to play all the five characters and in his life, he had never done any mimicry or any kind of duplicate work. He was a regular actor. It was fabulous. With this ad, we managed to connect with the old audience and yet, kept our youth in the loop and amused them too! A sequel to this concept was "Baap ke Zamane ke Daam", where we had voice-overs of "Amitabh-Abhishek".

As I explore being Indian, and humour as a potent blend, I am compelled to rewind back in time and bring forth an ad which every Indian loved; an ad of a brand that every Indian loves – Maruti. An adorable Sardar kid drives a miniature of a Maruti all day and night long and finally his father says, "Oye! Chotte bus kar yaar!" and the kid replies with a smart and funny one liner; *"Ki kara papa, petrol khatam hi nahin honda"*, to which, the father lovingly says, *"Champion"*. **Parshuraman -** the maker of this ad, shares as to how the kid, his colourful "pagdi" and the car won the love of the nation.

The Mileage called – Humour

Parshu, after you casted a Sardar kid in the Maruti ad, it sort of became a rage - an unsaid, lovingly adopted and watched trend! And to share with you, even I had casted Sardar kids; two of them in the ad of Tata Capital. Both of them were wearing a similar colourful turban; pink-red with polka dots.



'Yes! In fact, the blockbuster movie "Kuch Kuch Hota Hai" too, featured a Sardar kid with a colourful pagdi.'

How did this spectacle happen?

'Pops, we had suggested and even Maruti knew, that fuel efficiency was one of their greatest strengths. In the consumers' perception, Maruti scored above all, when it came to fuel efficiency. We were required to do a commercial around fuel efficiency. Back then, in my team, there was a guy named ***Arvind Pal Singh.*** *But everyone called him Candy; he was a Sardar himself. Candy came up with the idea of a little kid pushing a toy car for a long way, portraying fuel efficiency. So we all mulled over the idea and felt that it had meat. But something magical was missing! Suddenly, it occurred to us, that if we have a Sardar kid, the entire game would change. The Sardar kid*

was synonymous to attitude; "rutbaa" as we call in Hindi. It was the attitude of the little Sardar that transformed the story into being a phenomenon. I say this with confidence, because we shot the same ad with a small South Indian kid and it just didn't work. You had to have a little Sardar kid to make it work!'

A South Indian kid that is interesting! A bit about it?

'We were to release it for television in South India. We realized, that the Sardar kid was winning hearts on national television. What if we used a local kid? Would it create even more resonance! The ad turned out to be very cute; there was nothing wrong with the ad. But it lacked the indefinable magic, that the Sardar kid possessed. The Sardar kid held much more memorability. To support this magic, let me tell you a very amusing anecdote - I think at that point, somebody asked ***Atal Bihari Vajpayee*** *about his running for the second term, to which he replied saying, "Kya karu petrol khatam hi nahin honda" and yet another story is that,* ***Ram Nayak*** *who was the Minister of Petroleum said, that this is how the minority should be used in advertising. "Petrol khatam nahin honda, in a way became a slogan".'*

So was the kid a real Sardar? Or did you dress him up?

'He is a real Sardar and so is the father, who is casted in the film. Our producer found the kid and as for the father, whom we featured in the film, was Candy's friend. The father-son pair worked so beautifully, that we also involved them in a promotional activity later, where they did a bhangra together on stage. Once the film was made, the client did not immediately release it as a big-bang, since for the first time an ad was portraying a strong minority presence. So, they were a bit apprehensive and were wondering what to do! And then one of the executives in Maruti saw the ad and she told ***Mr. Khatar,*** *that they must run the ad. He kind of laughed and said "Ya! We should" and once they ran it, it was a great hit. The ad actually portrayed the bubbling, enthusiastic and gung-ho sense of life of the Sikhs. It worked because it was a loved Indian story and not a regional take.'*

Who directed the ad?

Nomita Roy Ghose *and* ***Subir Chatterjee*** *directed the ad and White Light produced it. Subir is married to a Punjabi, so in the first cut, they had put some really hard-core Punjabi. We toned it down and that is how we got the final line – "Ki kara papa, petrol khatam hi nahin honda'. My growing up in Delhi came handy, since I knew the language Punjabi and Haryanvi as well, even though I am a South-Indian by origin.'*

If I remember correctly, you guys also did a sequel of the same, with a grown-up Sardar boy?

'Yes! We did! But that film did not gain much traction. The reason being, we did that almost four or five years later. We ran the old ad first and then this, but I realized you cannot re-tell a joke.'

Was he the same kid?

'No Pops! He was a completely different character. Although we did use the same dad!'

How did the shoot go?

'Pops! I did not go for the shoot … but Candy did! He narrated that everyone was laughing through and through, at the shoot. It was a fun day!'

Parshu, yet another interesting ad of Maruti was the one, where you portrayed the mileage obsessed Indians. Yes, we have migrated to owning luxurious, high-end cars but the richest of all Indians, will also choose a Diesel car, due to its ability to provide more mileage. You transformed this obsession into a witty line, "Kitna deti hai?" Tell us the stories of that story.

'There is an interesting real life story behind this. The senior most individual in Maruti, had once told us about his friend, who had just purchased a Mercedes. When he was in the process of finalizing the car, he had literally asked, "What mileage does it give?" That is the way we Indians are trained to be by

our parents – frugal! It is part of our culture. We have been a country of limited resources for a very long time and this has led to an environment of living frugally, which has percolated even though the times have changed.'

I completely agree with you Parshu, do you remember the long queues for Kerosene?

'Ya! I do Pops! when Kerosene and Postman Oil and all these came to the ration-shop, people used to wait for almost one and a half day in the queue, to take turn in the night. So the nature of being frugal came across clearly, when he narrated the incident to us. We were always under the impression that it would be difficult to do anything better than "Papa ki kara petrol khatam hi nahin Honda". We were wondering how to beat ourselves and tell the mileage story again. We were in a real quandary of coming up with something better, than what we had done previously. At that point, ***Joy Mohanty,*** *one of our Creative Directors came to us and said, "You know! I was imagining a guy looking at a huge yacht … and then asking the mileage it gave!" What he said next, was how he asks and the question; "Kitna deti hai?" was coined.*

We all had a good laugh and but suddenly the brief changed from mileage to technology; the idea went away, it was lost! We started thinking on other lines. Then, nearly a year and a half passed, when suddenly out of somewhere we started to re-focus on Maruti's core strength of fuel efficiency. The idea that had sprouted long back, had made its mark on my mind. I put it forth again and talked to my partner and he said, it looks like a promising campaign. We then decided to discuss it with the client. We wrote some more scripts around it and the client loved it. Post that, it all sort of fell in place. The yacht one was the genesis of the entire campaign. The campaign was executed in 2010.'

The character in the yacht ad closely resembles Vijay Mallya. Was the look-a-like intentional?

'Pops! It was quite co-incidental but the combination worked well - the expensive yacht with a Vijay Mallya look-a-like, although it was in no way an intentional spoof.'

Where did you shoot?

'We shot the yacht one in Malaysia. I could not get a proper yacht in Mumbai for some reason.'

Who directed the film?

*'**Aiyyappa** was the director; he is quite a character! He is extremely energetic. **Anand Menon** was the producer. "Kitna deti hai" worked out really well, so much so, that the client asked us to plan a sequel of the same. With this, we again were in a catch 22 situation. The worry was how to tell the same joke in an interesting way. The only way out of it, we felt, was to find new situations. So the next interesting situation we carved out, was that of a Space ship. There, a very pompous and snobbish Indian scientist from NASA is explaining the high-end specs of a space ship in a staunch NRI American accent. He is explaining this to a group of Indian desis, including an aunty wearing a sweater. And one of the desi asks unabashedly, "Kitna deti hai". The moment is so full of wit.*

*The actor who played the scientist is **Sanjay Lafont**, who played Kareena Kapoor's fiancé in the movie; "3 Idiots". He played the part of the NRI scientist brilliantly. Yet another hilarious anecdote attached to this ad is, long after the release of the ad, we sent the story-board of the same to Doordarshan and a babu from the channel wrote back saying, please get a No Objection Certificate from NASA for the same. The paranoia of offending NASA was so high in them.'*

So were there any other executions of the same concept?

'Pops, we had a third execution which was built around a very interesting situation. There was an Indian Army General and a Russian Army General, who are conversing through an interpreter. The Russian General is talking about this lethal tank that they have, which has xyz features. The moment he has spoken about the armour and the guns, the Indian General asks,"Kitna deti hai?". This is immediately translated into Russian by the interpreter! We had loads of fun shooting this film. We used to roll around in laughter in my cabin.'

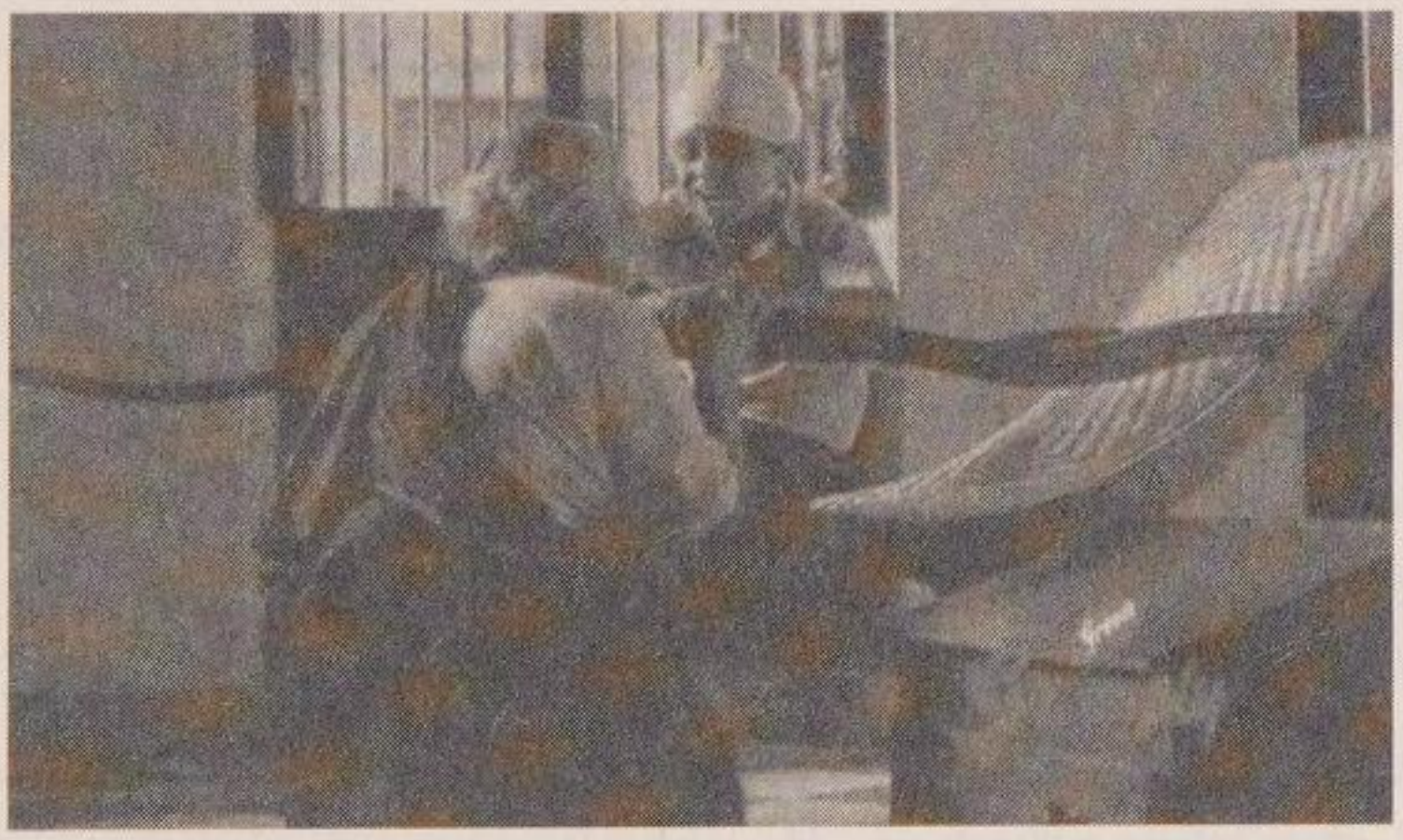
So what after effects did this ad garner?

'Pops just like, "Papa petrol khatam nahin honda", "Kitna deti hai?" became a very popular slogan. There were these continuous references to it - in all situations. One of the Japanese bike majors was launching one of their 1000 cc superbike in an auto-expo, and they went on and on, about the features of the bike and how good it was. After that, there was a silence and finally, one of the journalists from the crowd spoke, "Kitna deti hai?". Everyone around just cracked up. This was an actual life situation. The line had traversed beyond the campaign and became a popular culture back then. It has become a lexicon of the mileage world.'

In our conversation, I also asked Parshu as to what is it, that got this particular sequel to work; I knew, that the answer would be, the ability to weave innate Indianness to the ad. As we talked about the real life insights that made it work, he shared, *'Pops, for instance, the space ship ad, the chemistry of a NRI Indian who usually patronizes the typically Indian, worked brilliantly for this ad. Often in life, we see NRI's patronizing Indians and their ways. So here, we had a big-shot NASA guy, who is by-the-way originally Indian; explaining high-end science to a group of quintessential desis. An aunty, wearing a baseball cap with a saree and a sweater. The audience was a collection of atypical Indian tourists, who remain themselves. It was this chemistry and the characterization of typical Indians, which was loved by the viewers.'*

To be speaking of weaving innate Indianness and building interesting instances by using Indian minorities, yet another light-hearted tale of humour surfaces. A tale with a twist of reincarnation! A tale, where a Sardar boy is a reincarnation of an old South-Indian chap. It is a tale which is coined for a highly unpredictable brand Greenply. A commodity like ply, culled a story where two diverse cultures, the North and the South meet in an amusing space. It left its viewers in splits. The Greenply ad is the brilliance of Priti Nair, who is the creative brain and Prakash Varma, who is the Director of the film. I met both, and unearthed some unbelievable efforts that have gone behind making this ad.

It also resulted in yet another light-hearted story, that gave humour a twist of reincarnation. A little Sardar boy is actually a reincarnation of an old South-Indian chap. In all the highly unpredictable brand "Greenply". The small little story that portrays two diverse cultures of North and South, meet in the most amusing space, with an even funny intersection. *'Pops, a Sardar speaking Tamil, as a concept itself seemed wacky and outrageous! ! We were to do something for Greenply and things were stuck. So, I went to Delhi and asked for all the written scripts. I read all the scripts written for Greenply. The Tamil speaking Sardar kid was a script, which was amongst the rejected ones, by the internal team. But I felt it had some spark, so I said, we will go and sell it back. The key was to make the product the center of the story. In the initial script, the story had nothing to do with the table, so the client did not approve of it and the agency shelved it. So we tweaked the story a bit and introduced the table as the soul of the ad.*



On my way back from Delhi, I called Varma (Prakash Varma; Director of the ad), and said "Varma, I have this fantastic script". He replied asking it to be mailed across. I mailed him the script and he said, "I want to do it at any cost!" The budget was limited and so Varma requested me to pull in a little more, since he wanted shoot in Karaikutty; South. Even in that small

budget, the ambitions were high. So to make it happen, I called my partner back in Delhi, who is the head and told him let us forego our commissions for this. I possessed immense conviction for this script. So I was ready to give up my commission for Varma's need to shoot a brilliant ad. Since then, there was no turning back. ***Rupesh Kashyap*** *was the one who had thought of the reincarnation idea of a Tamil Sardar.'*

Tell us a bit about the journey of this wit filled story?

'There have been many hilarious moments attached to this ad. I remember, while doing the casting, Varma said, "Priti, I feel to appeal to my International audience - I should have a Chinese boy talking." I was apprehensive told him "I don't know Varma, the entire effect of a North Indian talking in a South Indian language seems like a very potential angle". So finally, after much mulling, we discarded the Chinese boy idea.'

Who was the old woman, Savitri? in the ad?

Prakash Varma got her from Bangalore. But we shot at Karaikutty, where we found amusing real life characters. If you remember, and see the ad again, you will spot an old man's painting, who is resting in an old fashioned chair. Now let me tell you, the actual story behind that painting. It isn't some readymade painting that we used. Varma actually found a very old man from Karaikutty, to pose on the first day and actually got a painter to paint him. That is the level of authenticity Varma brought in. He wanted the same chair to ensure continuity. Also, let me tell you, when we were shooting at Karaikutty, it was really hot. We shot through the night and finished at five in the morning.'

Tell me who was the little Sardar boy?He was really awesome!

'You would not believe this Pops ... but the little Sardar boy in real life, is actually a young Gujarati boy from Mumbai. Oh! He is so naughty! When he was off camera, wearing that pagdi, he used to talk in Gujarati. It was an entertaining sight. So in

the ad, we have a Gujarati boy, playing a Punjabi; a Sardar who speaks Tamil. We made him learn a few Tamil words, especially "Bus Nirtanga!" and also the accent. We chose the Gujarati boy, because often Sardar kids are soft-plump kids. We wanted a completely different looking Sardar boy. So, if you see his clothes, he is wearing a typical shirt with funny pants. The key ingredient here, was Varma's conviction on how he wanted the film to be; it resulted in a flawless entertaining ad!'

I completely agree with you Priti, the authenticity of every element in the film culminates into a successful ad. For instance the house, looking at it you can't believe that a story like this, can happen in a space like that.

'Pops, Varma took care of so many details! The silhouettes of people when he enters the house ... people asking in Tamil who is he, the woman falling when he calls that old lady his love.'

When I met Prakash and shared snippets about the conversation I had had with Priti, about Greenply, he too, went into a nostalgic mode and dished out some additional insights and anecdotes. *"Pops, the magic was there in the script itself and it was a script which pushes a director to do something even more magical. So, what I had in hand, was a brilliant idea ... now I added to it, my quirkiness. As a filmmaker, I search for an idea that excites me. So the idea was about a boy, who speaks a random language and enters a random house and it turns out to be a story of re-birth. I loved it, so I began adding details.*

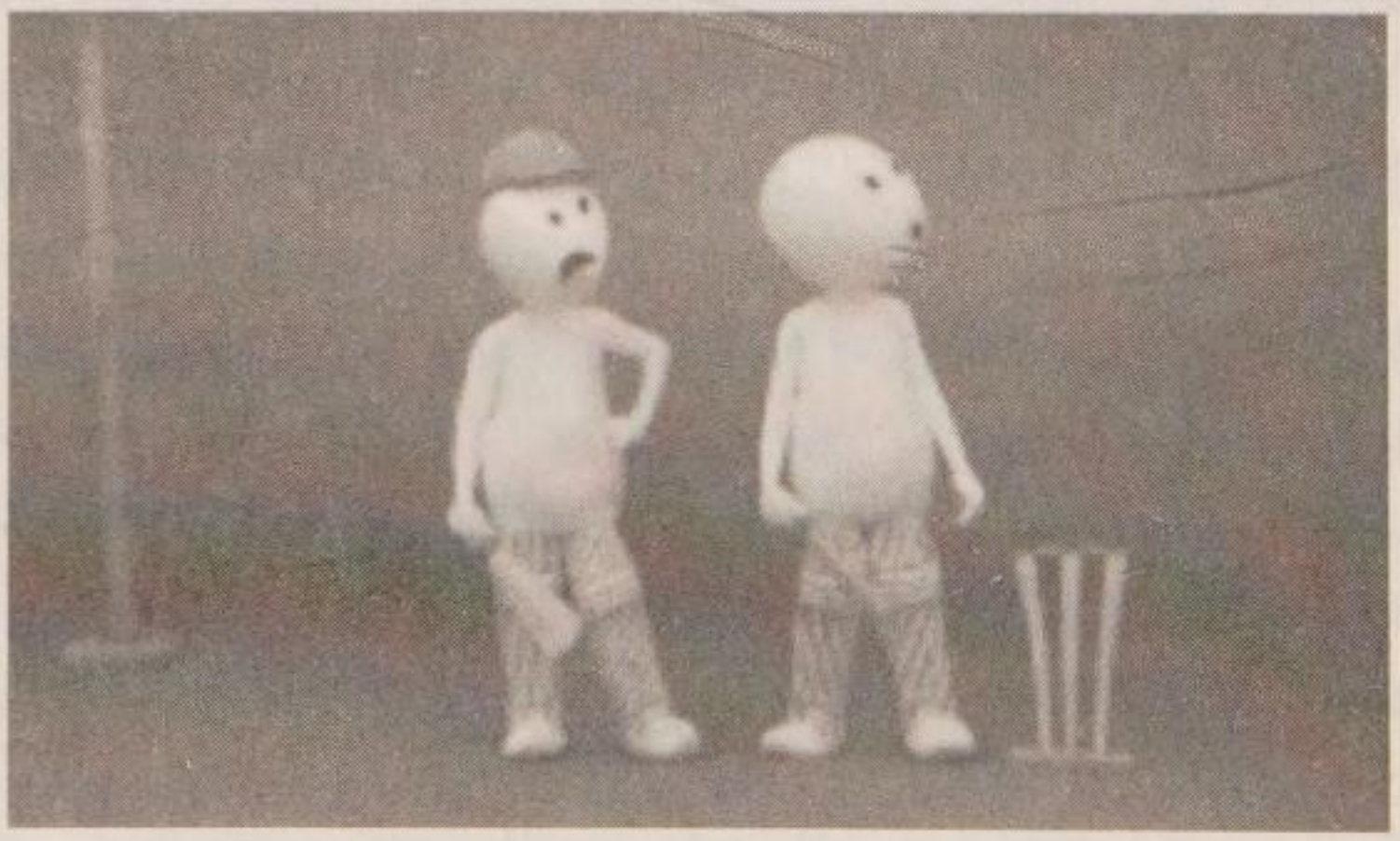
At first, we thought to have a Chinese boy. But then, finally we zeroed onto a Saradar boy. Now, the humor lies in the very visuals and situations. In a bus full of South-Indians, we see a flamboyant Punjabi family, that scene catches your attention and unfailingly amuses you. Then, we have the typical Punjabi mother, who is paranoid. She is not allowing her son, to look out of the window and is obsessed with feeding him. So much so, that she stuffs a biscuit in his mouth. Then, there is a Sardar kid, who is just busy looking outside and then, a father who is asking his wife to just let his son be, to let him look outside the window. And then, suddenly, he sees a random house and in the spur of the moment, breaks into another language altogether.

Pops! I as a director believe that the composition in a film has to be very strong. Your entire idea, the story needs to be told in that one shot; one frame. Thus, I paid extra attention to the detailing - the chair, the man and the painting. That shot explained re-birth and the durability of the product.'

The entertainment quotient earned a new benchmark, with Vodafone launching the Zoozoos campaign. In the history of advertising, this is one such ad, that has traversed beyond being a thirty seconder; It has actually become a phenomenon. The ad-paved the way for many possibilities - there was merchandising, events and so much that started being built around an idea, a concept, an ad. I spoke to Prakash Varma, the director of this ad; a man who has been associated with Vodafone right from its Pug campaign. Prakash shares the story and journey that led to Zoozoos!

The Zest of Zoozoos

Prakash when it comes to Zoozoos, the questions I have are endless and my curiosity is that of a little child! I am sure every reader of mine will share this feeling.



So let me begin from the beginning - how did Zoozoos happen?

'Zoozoos happened with the first IPL series. It was an idea that had germinated in the minds of Rajiv Rao and his team. IPL being a huge property, the ambition was to air a different film everyday. Everything about the zoozoos ad is born out of problems and pressure. The IPL was just round the corner and we hardly had any time. The task too, was rather humungous. When we started, we had no clue where we were heading to. We started by deciding to shoot thirty ads in one place. So we needed thirty stories or situations, born out of human emotions, to highlight thirty different services of Vodafone. Everything about the ads had to be unique and very interesting. We began sketching the Zoozoo character; we had a whole team working on it. Simultaneously, thirty different scripts were being written. Finally, we reached our destination, when we invented the egg headed, odd but cute looking Zoozoo!'

How did the name Zoozoo come about?

'Rajiv Rao was the one who thought of the name. There wasn't much logic to the name. He wanted the name to be simply fun, memorable and catchy. In no way, he wanted something clever and difficult to pronounce and thus, Zoozoos!'

When the ad was aired, you had everyone thinking that the character is an animated element, but it was fascinating to know, that they were actual people! Tell us about this twist?

'Yes! They were actual human beings who were made to wear suits. The characters were so designed that the viewer at first, feels that it is an animation. Rajiv's vision was that of creating 'live' animation.'

Tell us about these suits you got designed?

'It took me three weeks of pre-production to understand the nuances of the suit and how they would work. We had considered two fabrics. At first, we chose one and asked a vendor to make it and were to shoot shortly. When the suits came in, I wasn't happy with the suits at all. The material was clinging to the body, lots

of wrinkles were forming on it and it was too shiny. So in the last hour of the run, I decided to change the fabric and get the suits re-done. We had to do so, because the suits were an indispensable part of the ad, in fact, they were the Zoozoos. Those wrinkles and the clinging effect would have taken away the animated effect that we wanted. So, we chose a more practical and thicker fabric.

As for the head, it was made of Perspex. It had three holes on the top of the head for breathing. The head had no eyes and no mouth. The body suit was a separate suit, made of foam and fiber with tights, to create those thin arms and legs. We kept the hands and legs thin, which is why we cast women and occasionally children, wearing the costumes. The thin limbs, contrasted with big bellies and a bulbous head, all add to the illusion that these creatures are "smaller" than humans.'

If the head had no eyes or mouth, how did you manage to get all those myriad expressions?

'Pops! The expressions were actually cut-outs, stuck on the head separately, and they would be changed with every shot, depending on the reaction we wanted from the Zoozoo given a particular situation. We had different kinds of smiles - The eyebrows arched at varied angles, teeth, shocked expressions, laughter, anger and many more.'

Who made the costumes?

'We worked with a team called the "Closet" and they worked very hard. They did the best they could, in such a short span of time, to create multiple costumes for all the characters in record time.'

Casting would have been a challenge for this particular ad, as you had so many specifics and the act was unique and difficult in itself. How did you manage the casting part and where did you shoot?

'I decided to shoot in South Africa for two reasons. I wanted to try a new place, since we were trying to do something very different. Also, we wanted an animated look and feel for the ads; in that

short span of time, it was difficult to amass those resources in India, owing to the lack of technology and technicians. South Africa has those resources quite readily available. The casting too, is from there. We started looking for theater actors.

At first, we thought that we will shoot with kids only. But the suit would have been very harrowing for the little ones. Hence, we decided to take adult actors. Our requirement was really thin actors. We auditioned about thousands of people and finalized six of them.

Kudos to the actors; the cast was tremendous. Not fussy and extremely co-operative, despite the fact that they could emote, only through their body language. The job wasn't easy; you could see nothing through the costume. It was really hot and stuffy inside and yet, they did a brilliant job!'

Coming to the set-up, it looked like a different world - the look and feel. Some interesting facts on it?

'Zoozoos had to look smaller than their actual size on-screen. To achieve this, we adopted a cinematic trick. To achieve this, we altered the speed of shooting. A lots of trial and error happened, until we finalized on shooting it at the speed of twenty frames per second, as this choice helped us in achieving the animated look. Further more, the sets and props were made larger than normal, because we also had to ensure that the characters matched their world.

The proportions were crucial as we were using adult humans in the costume. As for the backdrops and set-up, it was all kept simple. We used spray paint and gave a neutral grey backdrop. We chose a neutral grey, so that the attention wasn't diverted from the zoozoos. For outdoor shoots, even the shadow of zoozoo was kept 'live' and not added in post-production. It was painted in a shade darker, of grey. There was virtually no post-production.'

Yet another interesting aspect about the ad is the language that the Zoozoos speak in; some kind of gibberish, how did you invent that?

'Sometimes, when you are doing something so tough, all you want these little things are for your personal entertainment.

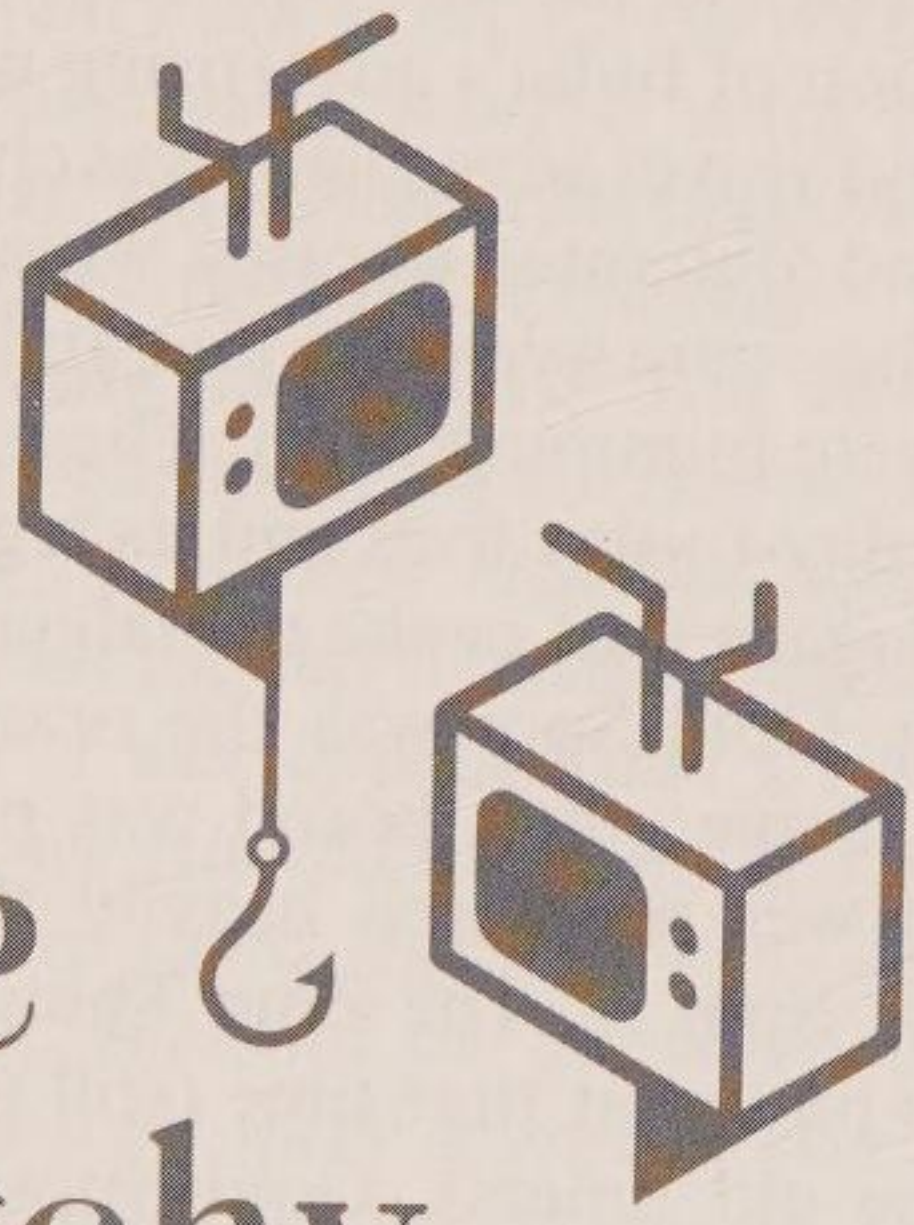
The gibberish they speak is Malayalam in reverse. Especially, for the International roaming ad, I was away from home, for about a month and I was missing the home-made mallu food. So just for my personal indulgence, I added Malayalam dishes like puttu kadala, kappa meen and parotta which sounded like general gibberish and it gave me the thrills!'

Who was the cinematographer and the art director?

'As for the cinematographer, I teamed up with my favourite - ***Vicci Turpin****. She made this production very exciting with her energy and hard work. Her contribution to the lighting, framing and the overall look and feel added a huge value to the film.* ***Sally*** *was the art director. Her sense of design is excellent. She painstakingly designed each set, each prop and planned the colour palette and tones, by using her vivid imagination.'*

Finally how many films were shot and in what time frame? And how was the overall experience?

'We shot thirty ads in ten days. The experience was rather wild. We had set out to create something totally new. Something, that would make the animators feel uneasy and filmmakers feel that it's too unreal to be 'live' action. The reaction on social media and other internet platforms was overwhelming and humbling.'



The Catchy Connection

The Catchy Connection

Principally, India as a country has been very auditory in nature. It is rightly said, 'We are an audio nation'. Our history has been carved and shaped through tales, that one generation told the other. We have had scholarly saints imparting their wisdom through speech. In fact, even the Bhagvad Gita is an audio revelation that Krishna bestowed upon Arjuna. Apart from these tales, which taught us a lot and shaped us, we have also been listening to entertainment. Music has been an integral part of our nation. This very auditory DNA was also the foundation of India's advertising world.

The early form of advertising was characterized by rhyming sentences and alliterated phrases, which had a certain musical ring to it. They were so catchy that audiences got hooked onto them and were humming them. These slogans then became a part of our day-to-day lives and its regular jokes.

Some slogans that evoke nostalgia are - Gold Spot – The Zing Thing. Gold Spot was the orange drink with a zingy taste. This iconic youth brand was positioned as 'The Zing Thing' and was promoted heavily through all media. The jingle "Gold Spot ... The Zing Thing" was one of the most memorable jingles at that time (still that jingle lingers in the mind of the old timers). Gold Spot was positioned as the youth brand and the ads talked about being crazy about the brand. The slogan made it to the popular culture, so much so, that The Los Angeles-based band Goldspot was supposed to be named after this fizzy drink.

Prahlad Kakkar was one of the many behind 'The Zing thing'. We saw many onomatopoeic slogans, like Lijjat Papad's 'Karram Kurram' seemingly gibberish words coming together, to create a certain sound effect. This was followed by a trend of rhyming couplets that also talked about the product benefit in ways. For instance - 'Safedi ki Chamkar'. Alyque Padamsee tells us some stories about this one.

'Unilever had a detergent bar, which had managed to gain some success in just one country of West Africa. It wasn't able to gain its hold in India, although India is one of the largest

washing market. The proposition on which they were selling the bar, was the economy. They said if you wash with a detergent bar, you save money. I told Unilever this wasn't the correct approach, because in India, people are looking for a washing soap that provides, 'whiteness'. India in those days, was a country where one of the staple colours was white. People wore white dhoti-kurta, white shirts and so on. But somehow, the team in India wasn't ready to buy this logic.

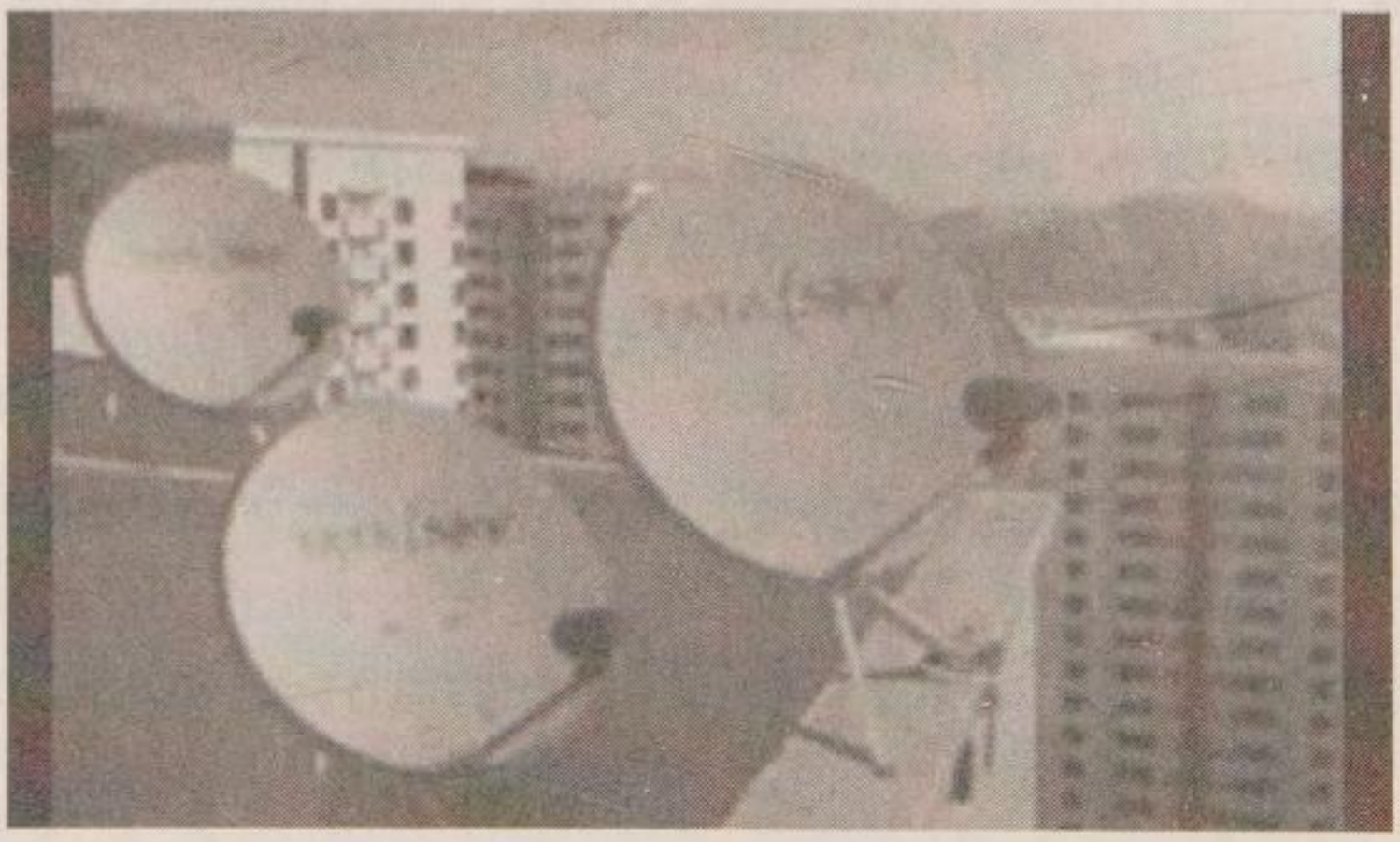
So, I approached the International team of Unilever, and they understood my point. But the bone of contention was how do we talk about the same 'whiteness' differently? I took this up as a challenge, and went back to all my copy-writers, asking them to visualize whiteness in all possible ways and come up with a slogan. In response, I got about a hundred slogans, and of them, I selected one, "Rin – Safedi ki Chamkar". The analogy of whitening with lightening worked well. You will not believe, when we submitted this slogan to the product manager along with the analogy, he had one of the most hilarious logic to deny it. "Mr. Padamsee, we cannot use this lightening analogy, because lightening kills people!" I was appalled and I replied, "Even water-falls can kill, but we still did use them in Liril! Right?". Without paying much heed to his logic, we went ahead and the result was overwhelming. We shot the ad where we portray a comparison, "Uski saree meri saree se safed kaise?" Lightning strikes and we have the bar along with its slogan, "Rin – Safedi ki chamkar; baar baar". This made Rin, an iconic brand. It was one of the most profitable brands of Unilever.

The bright light of lightening, the whitening of clothes and "Safedi ki Chamkar, Rin Bar" all together created a success, which was both catchy and informative. While this was a slogan, we had a detergent Nirma, which created an entire jingle, which included its target audience and the product benefits; weaved into a musical tune, one that we still hum. The jingle has surely been, "Sabki pasand". The brand name Nirma was actually christened after **Nirupama** (Nima), daughter of **Dr. Karsanbhai Patel**. The jingle has been running for the last thirty-five years and more. In fact, same radio spots have been used consistently for over twenty-eight years now.

Soon, television took over, and it also embraced the musical sense of advertising. The jingles and slogans got a visual rendition. We saw epic advertising like "Mile Sur", which had music as its pillar. This musical and slogan affability of advertising has only grown with time and evolution. Even today, we see ads, whose entire popularity rides on their slogans. As I traverse from yesterday to today, I reach an ad, whose slogan has become a part of the popular culture. It has been rendered into one-liner jokes, used in films as a comic element and is still loved. Tata Sky, the digital network service gave the world, "Isko laga dala, toh life Jingalala". We have **Ashish Khazanchi**; sharing the tales behind this highly entertaining line.

The Jingalala Moment

Ashish, I think, "Isko laga dala, toh life Jingalala" is one of the most popular slogans after radio days. A slogan, that may not make any sense but because of its phonetics, it has caught onto the imagination of everyone. It became so popular that even an Amul Hoarding was made for it!



How did such an entertaining idea dawn?

'Pops! It was also used in a Salman Khan movie. I feel, it became popular due to its sheer weirdness. "The once upon a time" of

this ad starts, when Tata Sky was coming up with a new way of watching television. This was during the times, when people had cable connections, which aired seventy to eighty channels and were happy with it. Tata Sky intended to usher in a quantum leap on how television was being watched. There were some satellite television options, but they weren't really gaining success. This was because, they took the technology route to reach customers, and that route proved to have an intimidating effect on the customers. As for Tata Sky, we were very clear on the route we would take. It was to be of "More entertainment coming your way". Not just seventy - eighty channels, but now the audience would get three times more channels. Increased choices in terms of content - active learning, games, cricket from different angles; it was more than just channels! It was about entertainment. To communicate this variety of entertainment, we needed a line; a slogan. So we got thinking.'

That is when the line 'Jingalala' line came up?

'No! The first line we thought of was, 'Dish nahin, Dishkyaun hai yeh', a line that said - It isn't just a Dish connection, but a huge change in the way people consume entertainment! We at the agency level found this line very catchy and hence, we wrote many commercials around this line. We went and presented this line and the commercials to the clients. ***Vikram Kaushik*** *and* ***Vikram Mehra*** *were the clients. After listening to the lines, they were a little apprehensive and said, "We are Tatas and we never take a dig at our competitors. We never denigrate them. It is against our company ethics." We were a bit confused as to which competitor are we taking a dig at? With this line? And they said, Dish TV. That is when we realized! Because, when we had written it, we had no reference to this angle. We were actually referring to the physical Dish Antenna. But yes, unintentionally it did turn out to be a competitive line. So now, we had to start from scratch.'*

What happened next?

'One day, I was sitting at home and thinking as to, what can be done now? What will be that line which will be as much fun and also ridiculously squeaky? One that can hold all that the product

has to offer. After a couple of attempts, I nailed it. For fun sake, I wrote the line, "Isko laga dala, toh life Jingalala" and found myself laughing out loud, alone, at my home. Immediately, I messaged Chax (KS Chakravarty) saying that I cracked it, and wrote the line. He replied with four to five smileys and said that he loved it. The next day, I shared the line within the office and everyone loved it and found it crazy. We went back and presented the entire communication plan to the client. Their immediate reaction was the best reaction; they started giggling and said, "Do it, it is very interesting". They also requested to come back with one more option, so that they have a benchmark against it. But it was obvious that they had liked the line; it came to everyone as an instinct!'

What was the other line you gave as an option?

'I guess it was, "Tata Sky ho sang, to gapu chi gapu chi gum gum."'

Once the 'Isko laga dala toh life Jingalala' slogan was out in the universe, what was the initial reaction it garnered?

'Initially, there was some cynicism which we faced, especially from the advertising fraternity. But the audience loved it and it began to gain popularity. Soon, the cynicism vanished. Pops! The line meant a lot of things; it told people that something big was on the way. It did not talk about the complicated picture quality and sound quality aspects. This line simply told people, that some kind of "Jingalala" is going to happen and got them curious. This resulted in people checking check it out. And the line, due to its fun and crazy element, gave us a creative respite. We could do all kinds of crazy thing in our ads. We dressed up kids like Einstein, we had a man dressed up like grass because he wanted to go to the stadium to watch a cricket match, from the best possible angles. The line back then, also had many versions, "Pooch dala toh life Jingalala", "Cricket hai toh life Jingalala".'

Who directed the ads?

'Most of the ads were directed by Ram Madhvani! Also, I would like to make a special mention here, our clients get full

credit for having stayed with this line for almost seven to eight years now.'

How did you think of the word, Jingalala?

'Honestly, I have no conscious memory of it source. But if I deliberate a bit, I think it had got stuck into my brain from the song "Hum bewafa" of Shalimar. The song has a tribal chant – "Jingalala hu, Jingalala hu".'

It is the power of creating something creative, out of gibberish, which gives way to such slogans. Being highly audio people, slogans like this become us. These creations make us traverse beyond languages and regions. One such slogan is also that of Havells; "Shock Laga laga, Shock laga". It was a crazy ad - A kid with a weird haircut, a troubled teacher and a switch-board that gives out shocks. All this with a background score of – "Shock laga laga, shock laga". Priti Nair, who is the brain behind this madness tells us some stories.

A Surprising Shock

Priti tell us how did this interesting line come about?

'Pops! This was the launch ad of Havells. For the first time, they were coming up with a television commercial. The script for the ad was written by a copywriter stationed at our Delhi office. About a little boy, who has this weird hair-do, all standing and pokey, he proves to be an issue at his school. So his teacher decides to visit his parents. When she rings the doorbell, she too, gets a shock and her hair also becomes like him. Once I went through the script, I really liked it. The only thing we needed, in order to complete this piece, was a track which had the word – "Shock" in it. I wanted something that really stuck in the mind and on the tongue. So he got thinking, and told me about this small lyrical, "Shaka laga, shaka laga, shaka laga" and said, we can improvise on this. So we gave this piece to Ram Sampath and he morphed it into a "Shock Laga laga, Shock laga, lagaa". It was recorded in this deliberate heavy voice.'
WHO IS THIS HE? THE COPYWRITER?

Who shot this film? And any incidents that happened during the shoot?

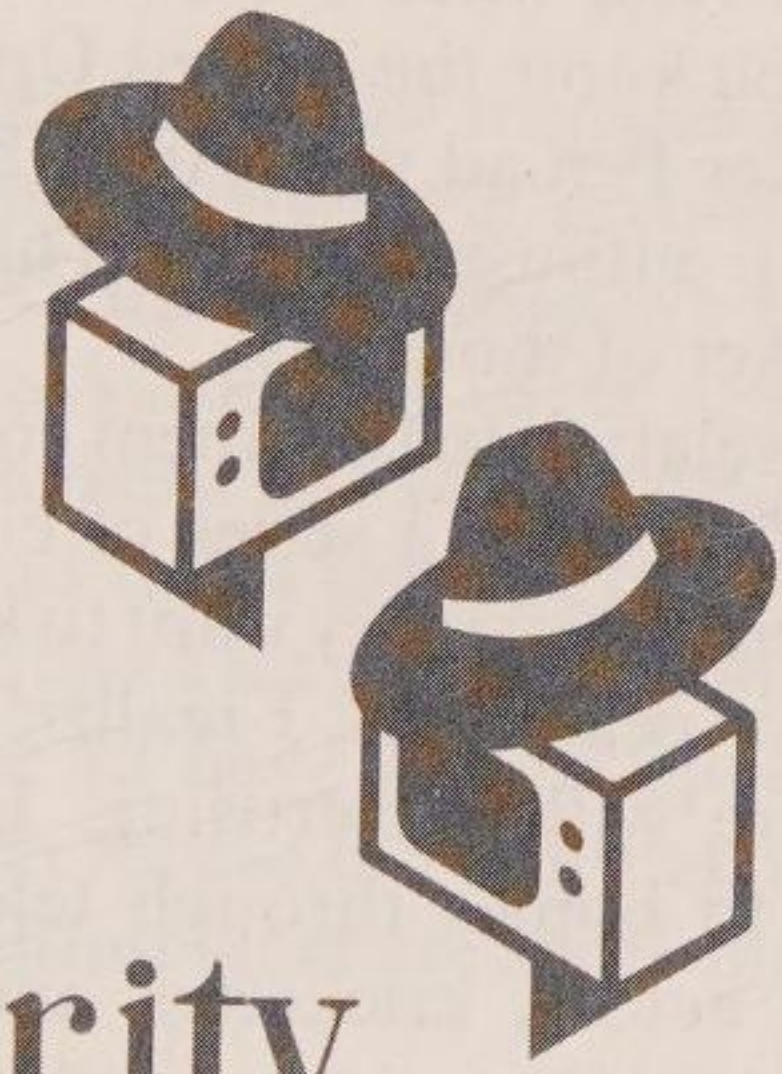
*'**Shivendra Singh Dungarpur** was the Director. During the shoot, by half time, the little boy had got all cranky. Actually due to his hair-do, everyone was laughing at him and this pissed him off. So he was all moody, sleepy and not wanting to shoot. Plus, the hair contraption was very heavy for him. Apart from that, we had a hard time shooting with the sparrow shot. Each time we would release a sparrow, it would go and sit on the ceiling fan. We had to get the shot right in three takes, since we had a limited number of sparrows. We had to be really careful with them.'*

Yes! The unique hair-do, how did you achieve it? How long did it take to finish the ad?

'It was a wig which was put onto his head. It was made all standing and pokey using hard gels. We shot the ad over two days, at two different locations. One was a house in Madh Island, and the other location was a school in South Mumbai.

I should tell you about a very interesting compliment that I got for this ad - *Once I was meeting **Neeta Ambani** for*

Vimal and she asked, "You are the one who did the 'Shock laga laga ad' right?" I nodded in affirmation. She then said, "My children love that slogan, each time they do something wrong or mischievous, they come and ask me – "Shock laga laga, shock laga?" Also the client has retained the slogan till date. In fact, back then, during cricket matches every time a wicket was taken or a four or a six was hit, the boy would come on the screen and wipe … and the slogan would appear above his head.'



The Celebrity Connection

The Celebrity Connection

My work has always kept me on my toes; travel has become an integral part of my life. There was a time, early in my career, when train journeys were a regular feature. Slowly, the mode of transport was upgraded but the travel remained constant, and so did the incidents attached to these travels. Often in my journeys, when I was not catching a few winks, I would find myself in conversation with my fellow traveller. The usual questions would pour in - where are you from? What do you do? And when I answer the latter, by simply asking them, do you know the Thums Up ad featuring Salman Khan or the Parker Pen ad with Amitabh Bachchan, their reaction is usually an enthusiastic nod. That is when I tell them, that I am the maker of those ads.

This revelation makes them come to the edge of their seat, and what follows is a series of curious questions, related to their favourite stars; they want to know it all. As I comprehend this love for celebrities, I realize the unbreakable bond that celebs share with advertising. Ever since ads have found their way to homes through television, we have witnessed our loved actors, cricketers and characters, all trying to tell us something; trying to sell us something. The love, fan following and admiration they garner, makes them trust-worthy influencers.

As I explore the varied facets and layers that ads contain, celebrities become a quintessential mention. What they say, the people listen. What they do, the people like. When we as consumers, see them on our television screens, we begin to share an intimate relationship with them. We feel, they are more approachable and this affinity is extended towards the product and the brand they are endorsing.

There was a time back in the yore, when celebrities were simply asked to hold the product and say, "I use this! Do you?" This mechanically tautological idea eventually faded out and what ushered in was insight based, innovative ways of weaving celebrities in ads. For instance, Aamir Khan playing varied quirky characters form a Jaat farmer to a Nepali guide for

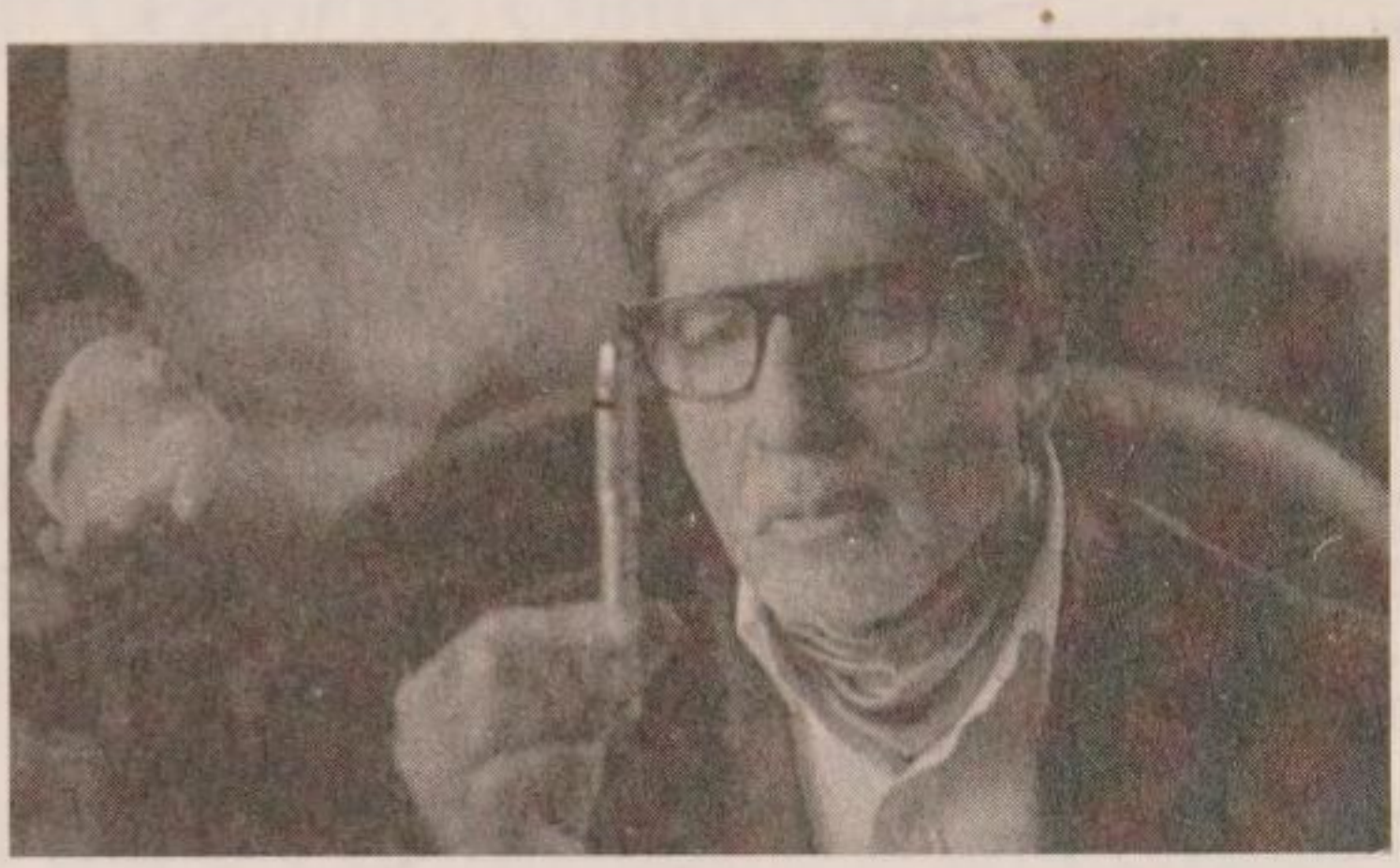
Coca-Cola or Zakir Hussain being himself, playing his Tabla and saying "Wah Taj". It is when the star power found a star insight that we have got ads, which have lived in the hearts of the consumers forever! But all through this evolution, the thing that has remained constant is your love and curiosity for your favourite stars.

Honouring them both – love and your curiosity, I treat you, my readers as the fellow travellers I meet; beginning to tell you stories of varied stars and how it was on sets, while shooting with them for those ads. How these living dreams are in real life? I met many friends of my fraternity and they had a lot to share.

Let's being with someone who has transcended beyond being a star and has become a persona everyone loves. His nick-name aptly encompasses his larger than life aura; Big B. Amitabh Bachchan has always ruled the silver screen, but his presence on our television screens has been a delight. We all savor, when each time, an ad featuring him is aired. He has endorsed many brands and quite a lot of us, from the ad world, have been fortunate enough to have got an opportunity to work with him. One common thread of all our experiences is, his unparalleled professionalism! Here are some Big B stories.

The Big B effect

I am an artist at heart; painting has been my innate way of expressing myself. One of my most vivid and early memories of painting for a living and with advertising, was my stint as a bill-board painter. I was good at portraits and observing this talent of mine, my father took me to his friend, who owned a bill-board painting company for Hindi and Telugu movies. In this job, I had painted a forty feet huge billboard of the movie 'Sholay'; one my first attempts to capture the aura called Amitabh Bachchan. As a youngster, while painting Big B, I had never anticipated that I would also get the opportunity to paint him through words and ads. But it all came together, while working for Lintas, when we got the account of Parker Pens. The brand was keen on signing Amitabh Bachchan as their brand ambassador.



The Wicked Uncle

Once the Parker Pen account was handed over to me, with the onus to bring Big B on board, I got thinking. The question nagging me was, how do I write him, script him. What shade of him hasn't been explored? I even wanted to call my friend, Javed Akhtar who had written Big B many times. Instead, I decided to watch Kaun Banega Crorepati, with the first season being aired then. As I watched a bunch of episodes, it occurred to me, that the aspect relevant about this man in today's day and age is his KBC persona. People love him not because he is a star, they love him all over again because of the affinity he displays on the show - the way he talks, the way he jokes and pulls someone's leg, connects with people; he isn't some star but a good friend on KBC. This shade of his persona became my anchor and we weaved the Parker ad idea around it.

The next day, I was to meet him and explain as to how we intend to portray him in the Parker Pen ad. If he would like the portrayal, it would mean he was on board! I visited him. This was for the first time that I was meeting him. After the ritual introductions and exchanging greetings, I started with my presentation, by telling him how we intended to portray him. I said, 'You are not an angry young man, you are not an actor'. He was quite taken aback by somebody saying such

strong words about his vintage image. I continued, 'You are like a wicked uncle. Today's generation does not connect with your old films and its roles ... they connect with you as a man who comes in KBC. They like your charm, they like the way you pull people's legs. There is certain dignity, love and charm in that shade of yours! They don't mind you taking that little liberty, because they feel you are like that family member, who often teases but is loved for that same habit. So you are that wicked uncle.' As I finished my monologue, he intently looked at me and said,

"Seriously you think so?"

I replied, 'Yes! I do! In fact, before this, I had a plan wherein I wanted to meet all the people who have written for you including Javed Akhtar ... but finally, when I saw you on KBC, I felt I don't need to go anywhere. I will write you as you. This is what you are and the audiences love you! And more so, the pens are for students and youngsters, who love this "wicked uncle" image of yours.' A visible apprehension and hesitance was evident on his face. Yet, he trusted me and said fine and signed the contract.

Yet another thing I noticed, when I was in his office, was a pen stand which was overflowing with about thirty to forty pens. If anybody would add any more pens they would start falling off. I started fiddling around with the pens. He was quite charmed and told me, "I love pens" and then, he went inside and got a couple of nice pens and showed them to me. He was so dearly fascinated by them. I made a mental notice of this trait of him and took his leave.

The next step was to write scripts around the central idea that we had freezed upon. I sat with my Delhi team. They brought a bunch of Parker Pens and left it on my table. I had some, Balki had some and the rest we distributed amongst the team. We were fiddling with the pens, when Balki and I happened to discuss that we make so much of money in advertising through writing and yet, we never had good pens. We always used to write with those Reynolds – use and throw pens. When a pen didn't write, Balki and I had a common

secretary; Mildred, whom we would call upon. She would come with a bunch of those pens and we would see which one would write and use it. We had never invested in a good pen and now, having one good pen in hand and having seen some of the best pens at Amitabh's office, I realized it feels good to write with a fine pen. We sat through that night - drinking, talking and writing and that is when the idea hit! What if you have a pen that once you write with, you want to keep on writing?

We married his love for pens, writing and holding a fine pen together, and wrote a script - Wherein from amongst the crowd, a fan, a girl (played by **Genelia**) approaches him for an autograph. She gives him a pen (which is apparently Parker) and a book. He signs and thoroughly enjoys writing with the pen. He looks at it with appreciation, turns the page and gives one more autograph and says, "Dost wost", then again, he turns the page, signs and says, "Padosi". Genelia, all thrilled keeps nodding. This goes on and he signs heaps of books as he signs for doodh-wala and paper-wala.

The script captured his love for writing. Late in the night, he writes his blog and often, he writes long letters to whom-so-ever he feels like writing to, puts them in an envelope and gets it delivered. He loves pens. He is a poet. All of this fused beautifully in this ad. The second script we wrote, was he in a restaurant. There he signs his own bill with a pen given by the waiter (which is a Parker) and he feels the urge to write more. So he takes somebody else's bill and signs it too and this goes on, until he signs all the bills. We used the element of exaggerated humour here!

With these scripts, I went to him for the second time and narrated them. He liked the scripts and I told him, 'Your love for pens and writing is the inspiration that led to these scripts'. We shot the ads and they were a hit! After doing Parker Pens, I remember meeting him for yet another ad. He met me and the first thing he said was, 'Popsji!' (Ya! He calls me Popsji, it feels really wonderful).

'Popsji! I was at Malaysia KL airport and some little children came to me for autographs. As I signed, one of the kid spoke,

"One more for doodhwala, one more for paperwala. I had never seen children taking so much liberty with me. You were right about my personality – 'Wicked uncle'. The ad you made has really become popular! People have liked the sense of humour." I was so enthralled by the sheer humility that this great man possessed. He was apprehensive in the beginning and when he had an experience, which validated and was in appreciation of the ad, he made it a point to remember it and tell me about it. This humility sets him apart from everyone.

I have had many incidents where his humility, respect for others and professionalism, has shined through. I remember while shooting for the second series of Parker Pen ads at Renaissance, Powai, Mumbai he came to me with the script and said, *'Popsji, mein yeh ek shabd badal raha hoon, kyunki aisa bolna zyada sahi rahega. Chalega?'* I was so surprised, I simply said, 'Sir, I am a South Indian and you are an expert when it comes to Hindi as a language ... you can very well change the words as per your knowledge and comfort, why ask me?' To which he said, *'Nahin Popsji! Aap lekhak hai, aur aap se poochna mera kartavya hai.'* Such is the respect he has for writers. Whenever he has an issue with a dialogue and wants to change, he doesn't approach the director, he actually goes to the writer. Along with this deep respect for writers and artists, he also possesses a naughty, sarcastic streak. For the next two days, he kept teasing me by calling me – "Lekhak ji!"

His professionalism is impeccable. Everyone and anyone who has worked with him, will know how punctual he is and how committed he is! I remember, we were to dub him at Empire studios for an ad. His mother was not keeping well and thus, he had requested to finish the dubbing early morning. He wanted to complete it and leave as soon as possible. Thus, we scheduled the dubbing for 7:00 AM. He came dot on time, driving himself in a Santro car. The previous night he had spent at the hospital. Early morning, he reached home and probably his driver hadn't arrived. Imagine, he drove himself. No qualms what-so-ever!

Apart from Parker Pens, another memorable association I have had with Amitabh Bachchan, is his anchoring of Bigg

Boss. With this, came yet another opportunity to paint him in yet, another hue.

A Pop Philosopher!

Colours Channel took the show Bigg Boss under its wing and we took over the brand. The head honchos of Colours wanted to sign Amitabh Bachchan as the 'sutradhar' of the show. When this idea was shared with Amitabh, he was a bit apprehensive, because the show had a very different imagery until then. And his image was quite different vis-à-vis Bigg Boss. Colours approached me, owing to my long-term association with him, with respect to Parker Pens. They asked, *'How can we make him fit into this show?'*

I replied, 'You can't fit him into the show, you will have to fit the show to suit his persona. The mountain cannot come to Mohammed. We will have to alter the show as per him.' It was established that the show will have to go through a metamorphosis, if we have to bring him on board. We got thinking and figured out that the show is about a bunch of people living in a house and the world observing them. You will witness a sea of emotions, mood swings and face-offs. It is like putting those rodents in a lab experiment, where you observe their changing behaviour. In a nutshell, it is a show about people interested in peoples' behaviour.

The sutradhar usually plays the role of an observer and has his own point of view, of what is unfolding inside the house. What if we improvise the role of the Sutradhar? In the Oprah Winfrey show, Oprah calls people from different walks of lives, hears their stories and at the end, presents her POV which is spread across a much larger canvas. Amitabh Bachchan is quite famous for his blog. To the world, he also is a social commentator, an observer of all things human. What if we borrow from this image of his, thereby, positioning him as a Pop Philosopher? We had hit the nail!

We decided to make him a Pop philosopher on the show; someone with great amount of wisdom! His role would be to impart non-biased comments and views, which do not endorse what people think and do inside. He will simply reason out

the behavioural tendencies that are being displayed. With this approach, the image of the show also changed. It was tweaked to fuse into this role of Amitabh Bachchan. I was to meet him and present this idea. Unfortunately, I could not make it so I video-taped my inputs. **Rajesh Kamat** and **Rameet Singh Arora** of Colours and **Kapil Mishra** – ECD at Leo Burnett went and presented the idea to him. He loved it and said, "It's perfect" and immediately signed the contract.

Just like me, my friends of the advertising world have a lot to share, when it comes to Amitabh Bachchan and advertising. Of all the celebs I know, Amitabh understands advertising and its people the most. He is now an integral part of our world too. His understanding towards advertising is evident, when we see the Kaun Banega Crorepati ads. All the issues that the ads of KBC have raised - be it girl child or education, have been taken seriously by the audience ... because Amitabh communicates with such passion. He isn't a mere brand ambassador for this show and its ads; he is the very identity! While I was a part of the KBC ads too, Nitesh Tiwari my friend and colleague was even more involved. So, I asked him to share the experience of making KBC ads with Big B. Along with him, the director of all KBC ads; Amit Sharma also tells us his side of the story. And just to let you all know, both are huge fans of his! But well, who isn't?

The Million-Dollar Man!

'Nitesh let's being from the very beginning! How did the quiz show for the convent going, urban class became a show for all who possess knowledge? How did you create this magic that connected the whole country?'

'We started with the ad– "Koi bhi sawal chota nahin hota". The job at hand was very challenging because, (a). KBC was coming after a time gap on Sony channel. The channel wanted to broaden the base of its viewers. They wanted to move beyond their staple audience "housewives" who watch both - soaps and KBC. The need to involve youngsters was seen clearly. The target audience was "everyone". This culled for an idea that communicates with the whole nation. (b). we had to stay away from the already set

imagery of KBC and think fresh. (c). And one challenge that I added from my end, was that we just don't need to do popular work; we want to do work that also in turn, helps the show with its viewership. After all, we don't make ads for ourselves! We make ads for the brand. If the brand isn't benefiting, there is no point of making even a popular ad. With these challenges at hand, the need of the hour was an insight, which had a broad canvas, so as to fit maximum people and make it relevant across audiences. And with this insight, we also need to concentrate on achieving impeccable execution, because the craft is also important … so as to appeal to a broader scope of people.'

Once the communication need was clear in your mind, what did you do next?

'We zeroed onto one element or flavour of communication. We decided that humour will be integral to whatever we do, because to communicate with the younger generation, it is essential to weave a fun element. Yes! The core aim was to give "gyaan" but it had to be imparted the ***'Raju Hirani'*** *way - with a twist of humour. Post this, we got thinking. We realized that if we do an ad around talent or money, it will not set KBC apart, as both factors are true for any game show. We dug deeper and realized that "knowledge" is the factor that can change the game here. After all, KBC as a show, at the end, is a test of your knowledge levels; it ascertains how much do you know!'*

After having decided to make knowledge your anchor, how did you string the idea on to it?

'Pops! As we kept thinking, my life's personal experience flashed in front of me. I always have remembered one thing, which my father had said - I have found it very fascinating. He said, "I have never had enough money in my life, but I have decided one thing, that I will never stop studying in my entire lifetime. So he has done MA, then MA again because he did not want to work at that time. So that makes him a double MA. Again, he did not want to do a job so he did a PHD on ***Rabindranath Tagore****. Then he did LLB. After this, he finally took up a job - as a*

professor and started teaching. Yet, he felt that although his MA and PHD degrees found a practical application, his LLB degree was rendered useless. This was until he became a principal and additional director of higher education, where his job was to take up cases filed by employees against the government.

One day, he came back home all happy, and said, "Finally, one degree I thought had gone waste is now coming very handy". And he said, "Knowledge aap kitni bhi bator lo, kahin bhi bator lo, kabhi bekar nahin jaati". (No amount of knowledge you gain, ever goes waste). This stayed with me and I felt - this is it! What if we just reverse this ideology and show a person, who has never respected knowledge that came his way! This disrespect will come back and haunt him at the worst possible place i. e. "The hot seat of KBC".'

Truly interesting! And if I am not incorrect, we then went and presented the idea to the client?

'Yes! The first line which we derived from the insight was, "Gyaan kabhi vyarth nahin jaata" but somehow, the line was too heavy to render itself into a viable commercial. So, we tweaked it a bit and changed it to, "Koi bhi sawaal chota nahin hota". I am of the belief, that when an idea you love cannot render itself into a successful ad, drop it and move on. Once we had our line and our script, we told the client that it will be a story about a man who is once asked by his son, "Papa! Akbar ka baap kaun tha?" He doesn't know the answer and doesn't even care to find out. This disrespect for knowledge comes back and bites him on the "Hot seat". The client loved the idea and asked us to develop it.'

Why the question, "Akbar ka baap?"

'Honestly, we could did not find anything as good as "Akbar ka baap"! The question has a certain ring to it. We must have coined numerous questions but nothing felt as good as this one. Once our question was decided, I needed situations to be built in the script. The idea was so promising, that I wanted to do all possible justice to it. So I approached my wife, Ashwini who was the ECD and sought her permission to open this idea, to the

best of the resources we had across the agency. I did not want to restrict it to just my team. It was going to be a montage film … if one good guys comes up with one good idea, and I opened it up to more people … I would have more good ideas, which will come together to form a great script! We followed this format of working for all KBC ads. Someone used to get an insight and then, all the writers would write the ad.'

When was all this happening, year wise?

'2010, I remember … because the age of KBC's first campaign done by us, is equal to the age of my kids. I was so busy with the campaign that I could not make it for the delivery!'

What was Amitabh Bachchan's reaction when you narrated this script to him?

'It was my first elaborate meeting with Amitabh Bachchan. It was scheduled at his residence and I was quite nervous. Before I tell you about my meeting with him, let me give you a background on the kind of fan I am of his. My history with Amitabh Bachchan is completely different. I have grown up in the awe of him. I had stopped watching his films for quite a while, because he would die in them. He dies in Sholay, Mukadar ka Sikander, Deewar . . . I just could not take him dying! I was just seven back then. I was born around the year when Sholay was released, but since it kept coming, I had seen it. I was … and still am crazy about him. As a kid, I would cycle five kilometeres to see his movies, only to find out that it is running houseful. This used to make me happy, because his films were running houseful and then, I would huppily cycle back the five kilometers. I remember cycling to Gwalior twice, to watch Hum and both the times, it was houseful. My craze for him was an inheritance from my parents and relatives - they are ardent Bachchan fans. When he was injured during Coolie, my mother used to sit near the radio for hours, in anticipation of any news related to him. I was really young and could not understand my mother's behaviour. Such is the insanity I possess for him! Now imagine, I am about to narrate a script to him!

I was told very clearly that I would be the one, who would narrate the KBC ad to him. Amitabh has this habit, which I did not know then; now I do. Whenever you narrate something to him, he will look at you intently, unblinkingly and his face will always be expressionless. We meet him and I began narrating - "Akbar ka baap" … he was just looking at me, with his mouth slightly open (Nitesh demonstrates the face). I kept the paper down after narrating "Akbar ka baap", thinking he will react now … but he did not. I went on to narrate the second script in the series, "Tum mujhe khoon do, mein tumhe aazadi doonga". Even then, there was no change! Not a single expression! What persisted was that intent stare. I narrated the third and the final "Samvidhaan" one and then I said, "That's it!". So he asked, "That's it?" and I was thinking, now he is going to say this was complete bull-shit! He looked around at the team and said, "This is wonderful! This is lovely stuff, very good!".

I was so relieved at that time, for more than eight minutes my heart was in my mouth. It was such a tense moment. Here I was sitting across a person, one who I have loved, admired and had been in the awe of, all my life. I was narrating something to him and he wasn't just reacting. It was very unnerving, but then, I realized working with him that this was his habit.'

'One thing, that I would like to mention here is that, I truly appreciate both; the client Sony and Amitabh Bachchan to have given their approval, because in the KBC ads we did, the idea was greater than the star personality. Often, clients are tempted to provide maximum screen space to Amitabh, since it is him. But in our ads, out of the sixty seconds, Amitabh is hardly present for ten to fifteen seconds and the rest of the time, some unknown people and characters play out on the screen. This is something unheard of, in the industry.

In the last five years of doing KBC ads, never has Amitabh questioned this approach or tried to change anything in the script. But then, he is made of different stuff altogether. All these years, he was more than happy to come on screen and play himself. Pops! Even for those ten to fifteen seconds, he adds this flavor! All the ads he did, he knows the entire story and how the protagonist

of the story feels. At the end, he is to say a sentence - in that moment, he has this sarcastic expression on his face! While he is saying something, his face is saying something else. For instance, when he says, "100 per cent logo ne kaha hai India … yeh baat toh sabhi jante hai!" It has this sarcasm! Also, the way he pulls the guys leg in "Akabar ka baap", "Kuch suna suna sa lagta hai na?" - this adds so much drama to that moment.'

Can you share any particular reaction or compliment that he gave - related to these ads?

'This year, he sent a text message. He usually sends the message to the director. But this year, he messaged me saying, "Nitesh, I just saw the Hindu-Muslim ad … lovely stuff! Aankhein bhar aayi … even the Kohima one is very good". I save all his messages. Even the girl child one, he loved.'

He also loved the KBC anthem written by Neeraj Singh?

'Yes! He was really blown away by that anthem. In fact, he went back and checked if it was written by his father. He then came to Neeraj and especially complimented him that! For a moment, he thought that we had tweaked around with one of his father's poetry. The anthem had a feel of Agneepath to it!'

I too, loved that anthem so much, that once when Rajkumar Hirani had visited our office, I made Neeraj narrate that poem to him. He then asked Neeraj to write a poem for one of his upcoming films!

Any other anecdotes of KBC and Amitabh Bachchan?

'Yes! The Loud-speaker one, that we did for KBC. We also knew that we cannot just do serious, emotional commercials … we also need to keep the entertainment quotient intact. So closer to the release of the season, we planned a more entertaining ad – one rallying around a community. It was about a person going out of the way for his community. This man, who is on the hot-seat belongs to a small town and his community is crazy about Amitabh Bachchan. So he wastes a lifeline – "Phone-a-friend" and when Amitabh says, "Hello, mein Amitabh Bachchan bol

raha hoon … Kaun Banega Crorepati se!", the entire community goes berserk. Amitabh then asks the contestant, "Tum toh parivar se baat karne waale the …" and the contestant replies saying, "Yeh bhi toh parivar hai!"'

If I am not wrong you directed this commercial?

'Correct Pops! Unfortunately, Amit wasn't available then. Let me tell you what happened. I wanted to do something special and interesting in this ad, but mera popat ho gaya (but it did not happen). Amitabh Bachchan's part was shot before the rest of the ad. I knew we were shooting this ad in a small village called Dharmaj, situated in Gujarat. I wanted Amitabh to say, "Dharmaj ke vasiyon, mein Amitabh Bachchan bol raja hoon, Kaun Banega Crorepati se! Aap sabko mera namaskar!" And I wanted to play this suddenly on the loudspeaker at Dharmaj … place some secret cameras and capture the natural reaction of the villagers. But during the day of shoot, he had to catch a flight to Brazil for the football world-cup and hence, he was short on time. Thus, I could not get him to do this live and my secret plan went for a toss.'

Why did you select Dharmaj as your location?

'The script was about people getting ready, for something which you and they don't know about. No one knew why the loudspeakers were being installed. I needed a town which had interesting architecture and balconies … else it would become a very boring shot. It was a task to go and shoot there, since it is a remote village. But it is a 125 years old town and is extremely interesting. Nothing has changed there - the streets, balconies, buildings, they all have a very deep character. I did not have to do too much art direction, because the town itself was so beautiful.'

Apart from this, most of the KBC ads Amit has directed. Right?

'Ya! We wanted Amit to shoot them. We were so glad to have him on board. Amit embraced KBC like his own baby and that is the kind of partnership, which we required. We wanted someone, who is not only talented but also willing to sacrifice a bit for the campaign. Pops! It is an apt team that led to such a

phenomenal success. I still remember, going to watch a movie at Fun Cinemas, where "Akbar ka Baap" ad was played. I saw three – four youngsters mouthing the dialogues word-to-word and chuckling. Even for the girl child one, when it was played in the cinemas, there was this complete silence and everyone was watching it attentively; an ad which they had already seen. When you see all this … you know you have made an impact!'

As Nitesh shared what he had to, I realized how much Amitabh Bachchan respects talent. He grew so close to Nitesh that when BR Chopra asked Nitesh to write a script for "Bhootnath Returns", Nitesh wrote it and narrated the same to Amitabh. He liked it and told Nitesh that, "Nitesh you have to direct this film … only then I shall act". Nitesh said, he won't be able to, since he has a lot of work and will not get a leave. Amitabh said, "Nothing doing! You have to direct the film and about your leave, I will speak to Pops!""

Amit who directed the ads, enthusiastically shared with me his experience with Amitabh Bachchan.

'Pops! This was the first time that I was shooting with Amitabh Bachchan. I knew him due to Abhishek, as I had done the Idea ads. But personally, with him, it was my first experience. I was super excited! As a kid, I used to see his films and cry because he died in Sholay, Khuda Gawah and others. I have grown up on his films, as my father is a big film buff. We were the first one to get a VCR in our colony. I remember, I was once offered an ad film featuring Amitabh Bachchan by O&M but the client had refused saying, I was too young to handle Sr. Bachchan. I was very hurt then. And this time, I did get an opportunity. On the first day of our shoot, I approached him and we began conversing. It was a big thing! I said, "Sir, it is an honour to work with you. I know a lot of people must have told you so … but it has been my dream to work with you. And the dream comes true today! So with all his humility he replied -

"Arey nahin! Nahin Amit … kya baat karte ho!" And I continued to talk, "But sir, before this ad film, I have refused fifty-five ad films featuring you." He was rather surprised and

said, "Arey kyon? Tumhe to kaam karna tha nah mere saath.", so I said, "Haan sir, par saari ad films aisi aati thi, jismein mein apna kaam dikha nahin sakta tha. I wanted to work with you for an ad, where I could show my work to you. Not some ad, where you will come, dub and go. I promise you … when you see this ad, you will be proud of me!" So, he asked me, "You like this ad film". I said, "Yes!" From that moment on, a certain chord was struck and we became close.

Any other anecdote?

'Yes Pops! One that will portray how great this man is! The launch of the girl child campaign was happening at Marriot and I was running forty-five minutes late. When I reached, Nitesh and everybody had gone on the stage and come down. Mr. Bachchan was still on the stage and I went and stood down, near the stage. One light came on to me and he called me, "Amit! Amit hai kya vahan pe?" and then, he asked me to come and join him on the stage. I went up and he said, "Aapney jitni bhi filmein yahan pe dekhi woh sab inhi mahashay ne banaai hai. Jinko dekh ke aapne itni taaliyan bajai hai, yeh taaliyan zara inke liye bhi baja dijiye." I was so nervous, I kept saying, "Sir please, sir" and he told me, "But you deserve it, I cry when I see the film". There was no need for him to do this, yet he does it every time. I remember, Mr. Bachchan came and gave me the award for the Google Reunion ad. Piyush sir was crying on the stage and even I was there. And he said, "Arey din mein das dafa dekhte hai, das dafe rote hai!"'

Moving on from the KBC ads, let me tell you about some little anecdotes that R Balki had to share about his working with Amitabh Bachchan, in the ads. Balki for the first time brought the father-son duo together on screen, for the Maruti Versa ad. The chemistry the two shared is remembered even today. As Balki rightly puts, *"Amitabh and Abhishek are very close friends, they are more so buddies."* Talking about the meeting Amitabh, to narrate the ad script for the first time, Balki told me about Amitabh's sharp and sarcastic sense of humour. *"I was narrating him an ad script and while doing so,*

I did not realize that I was narrating his dialogues in his style to him ... in that heavy baritone voice. I just could not help it, because the only way I knew ... was his way. So he patiently listened to me for twelve minutes and after I finished, he asked, "Why are you reading it like me?" and all that I could manage to say was - "Because I don't know any other way to behave". It is very difficult to narrate to Mr. Bachchan without using his voice.'

After the legendary Amitabh Bachchan stories, are many tinsel-town tales of celebs in the advertising world! Who doesn't remember the multiple funny and quirky characters that **Aamir Khan** plays, for Coca-Cola. Prasoon Joshi, the brain behind this brilliance, tells us some interesting anecdotes.

The Perfectionist's Perfection

'Prasoon, tell us about the "Thanda matlab Coca-Cola" campaign - it has been one of the most entertaining and successful campaigns ever. On the contrary, to the way celebs are used in ads, you created an innovation of sorts - by using Aamir as a character in every ad. How did this entire thing take shape?'

'The seeds of our friendship were laid during this campaign. Back then, he didn't have much respect for advertising people and I had my own preconceived notion about Bollywood. But as we met and began discussing the ad scripts, we began to

gel really well. During the narrations, I used to get into the character; -so for instance, while telling him the Punjabi farmer script, I would speak in Punjabi. This really amused him. His reactions to the script were very encouraging and we went on to do many versions and it ran, for many years. He was always excited to do the next character and for one ad, he even ended up playing a woman. For the first time, we casted a star as a character. The result of this entire campaign was our bonding, and I ended up writing dialogues of Rang De Basanti.'

Why such quirky, regional characters?

'In my view – dialects and small, cultural elements add a lot of value to an ad. There is a rhythm to each language. This campaign was an amalgamation of all my experiences, with respect to the places I had visited and the dialects I had absorbed. In general, I am very good with languages. I have learnt Russian, and Pahadi; with both its dialects – Arbi and Urdu. I have also learnt Hindi and Urdu poetry. English I learnt quite late in my life. My nursery rhymes weren't in English ... they were all Hindi. In my view, urban people understand very little about non-metro cities and towns. Nobody understands what small towns are.

*For many, Lucknow is a small town. For the first time, when I went to Lucknow, I realized it is so big. Small towns are Narendra Nagar and Gopeshwar; where I was born. In these towns, everyone knows everyone and people don't lock their homes. The idea was to portray a confident small-town person in each ad. Someone, who isn't intimidated by city people. So, in the ad when the girls tell Aamir, "Tussi great ho", he replies confidently,"Oye yaara da tashan". **Ashutosh Gowariker** was the director of these ads.'*

Tell us a bit about the first ad, which featured Aamir as a Punjabi farmer?

'I am well attuned to the Punjabi language, since I was living in Delhi for quite a long time. In Delhi, Punjabi is an integral part of

the regular language. You cannot escape hearing Punjabi. From a restaurant to a roadside vendor, everyone assumes that you know Punjabi. My Punjabi came at hand for the first ad; every line was given immense importance. Like – "Yeh ganne ke khet wich tamatar kitho?" or "Nadiyan, nehre sab ethe hi manga le". Pops! Also let me tell you, the Punjabi ad was shot in the South, in a village called Pollachi. People there were very friendly. They did not hassle or mob us. Even Aamir could walk around without being bothered. We recreated the Punjabi Sugarcane field there. I remember, back then, a ***Rajnikant*** *film called Baba was running and all of us had gone to see that movie. It was great fun!'*

Now tell me how did you think of the word 'Thanda"?

'Pops! In any small town, beverages are of two types - Thanda and Garam (Cold and hot). The common word used for cold drinks was "Thanda". I felt, it would be a nice idea to own this place by saying, "Thanda matlab Coca-Cola". Yet another real life observation I used, was that of the Coca-Cola bottles in a well. I had notices that in villages, to keep the mangoes cool they are kept in a well. The well is like a natural refrigerator. I kept the Coca-Cola bottles in the well.'

How was the experience of working with Ashutosh Gowariker?

'It was great! He is a thinker director. He would keep ideating with me and we would have our own creative arguments. For instance, in the ad where Aamir plays the Nepali guide, there is a point when the guy is irritated and says, "Khudh ko Aamir Khan samajhta hai" So, Aamir replied, "Samajhta nahin sahib, hai!" For the end of this ad, we had thought of one more thing, Aamir continues to say, "Ab ***Aishwarya Rai*** *ko bhi bulayega" and he shouts out – "Arrey Kanchi" and Aishwarya Rai would come into the frame, as she was with Coca-Cola back then. But this did not work out. For the end Ashutosh had another suggestion, that as the last frame, Aamir is dancing for the couple and they are enjoying it.*

I wasn't convinced with this end, since I wanted to portray a confident small town person. Such a person wouldn't dance to

make the couple happy. I said, he should dance for himself. He said, "No! It is an evening shot, it won't look good!" I however, was not ready to compromise with the character. So we shot the endings, one with the couple, and one without the couple. I think, we finally carried the one with them in the frame, but he was dancing on his own … and we kept it a very small duration.'

Any other on the shoot anecdotes?

'The Nepali Guide one we shot at Manali. When we reached on location, it was snowing on those dates. We couldn't shoot because of the snow and the lights. So, the entire day we would only play Table Tennis. At that time, Aamir was supposed to receive a Padma Shree but hats off to his dedication, he decided that he would only leave after finishing the ad film. For him, it doesn't matter whether it is an ad or a feature film, the commitment levels are the same. I truly respect him for that. Eventually, the weather was clear and we could complete the shooting. He made it just in time for his award.'

The ad where he plays a Japanese guy, you have a very interesting background track - where did you get that?

'Pops! If you listen to it carefully, it's not a Japanese song - it is Hindi and the lyrics are (singing in Japanese style) "Pardesi babu, aaya mere gaon". Most of the music was done by ***Rajat Dholakia*** *aka Zuku.'*

How did you manage to have so many dialects and their nuances?

'Most of those languages are known to me. But still, I call and involve people of that region and learn the details. For instance, for the Hyderabadi ad I had written a line "Thanda piko nikal gayi, mere ko pyasa chod gayi". So I knew a Hyderabadi person, who I called and he said I should change it to, "Thanda piku nikal gayi". I used to record my own voice and voices of different people for Aamir.

He is a great learner and also very particular about dialects and pronunciations. When we did the Bihari character, I knew a

*guy called **Arshan** in Delhi and he was from Bihar. I would ask him how to say, "Budbakh" and he would teach me the Bihari way of saying it. I also learnt that Bihari's use a bit of English in their speech and so the lines, "Phinger kitna hai, tanik counting karo toh" and ""Arey bhai! Hum to nervousa gaye". A lot of hard work has gone behind these ads.'*

Tell us a bit about Aamir - how is he?

'He has contributed a lot to these films. He is the kind of an actor, who gets involved in whatever he does. He is extremely creative and loves experimenting. He will keep coming up to me and say, "Mein aise bolke dikhata hoon, mein vaise bol ke dikhata hoon". No ego exists between the two of us. One thing that I understood about him, is that he has a keen interest in achieving a brilliant final product. So whatever he says, is only for the good of the film. And this, you realize, when you finally see it on thescreen. For instance in the Bihari Babu film, towards the end, he says, "Thande ka tadka lagai diya re, harmonia bajai ke". I had originally written, "Hosh thikane lagai diyo re, harmonia bajai ke". And he said "Arey ismein thanda word toh aana hi chahiye". Then I said, "Okay! Let's make it Thande ka tadka".'

Any other anecdotes about this ad?

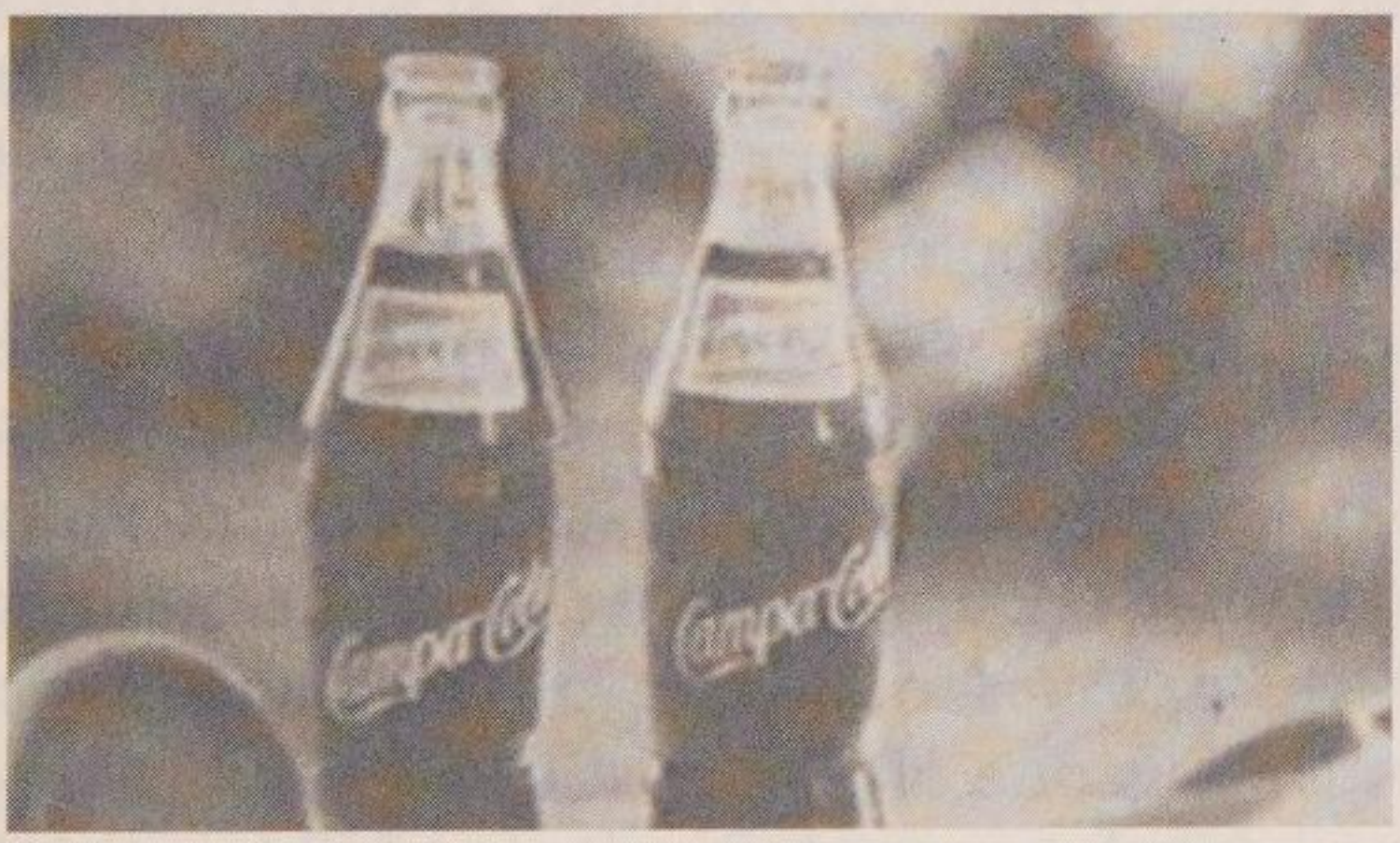
'One interesting thing about this campaign, that many won't know, is that this was also shot in two other countries. I shot three ads for Indonesia and one for China. And they too, worked really well. In Indonesia it was a task to find someone of the caliber of Aamir. Finally, we found a MTV VJ of Indonesia to do his part and dialogues are used minimally in that country. It is more about body movement forms like Kayaban; something like rural Kung-fu.'

Yet another aspect of the stars, which has been explored in ads, is their macho, action hero image. Colas have used this to propagate their tastes. While Coca-Cola used Aamir's creative excellence, the age-old Campa-Cola used Salman Khan's athletic demeanour, whereas Thums Up adopted the

adventurous side of Akshay Kumar and Salman. Here are some interesting stories of theirs.

The Macho Mania

Kailash Surendranath, back in the days of yore, had casted Salman Khan in an ad of Campa-Cola, when he was just fifteen years old. Sharing the story he says, *'**Salman Khan** was just fifteen then and he had no ambition of being an actor. I saw him at the Searock's playmate club; Bandra. My wife's father was managing that club and we were shooting there. We were shooting for Campa-Cola. We had casted some models, like **Ayesha** who is **Jackie Shroff's** wife and now, we needed a male model. So **Aarti**'s father said, there is this guy who comes swimming here. He is Salim Khan's son, you can take him. I said, "OK, send me over".*



He came to my office, and he came without a T-shirt there also. We discussed and he was a good swimmer too. We selected him. He turned out to be very good. We did an underwater shoot also. The first day itself, he became popular with the models and everyone loved him. We used to play pranks - he used to play some telepathic game, which I think he still does. Back then, he was in Elphinstone College. We often used to party at my pad in Bandra.'

We too, have used this macho image of Salman for the Thums Up ads. He loved the concept of "Aaj kuchh toofani karte hai". We had shared the idea that every person has a lot bottled up within them - a lot of adventure andthrill; one just needs to open up like the bottle of Thums Up! He is very attached to Thums Up as a brand, and willingly came back with great enthusiasm. When we had launched the first ad in the "Aaj kuchh toofani karte hai" series, we did a special premiere on Facebook, exclusively for Salman fans and more than 300 thousand people saw it. The same ad for South, featuring Mahesh Babu received about fifteen million views.

Akshay Kumar was the adventurous shade of Thums Up. He was an integral part of the brand. So much so, that he would go out of the way for it. Ever since the bungee jumping ad featuring Nakul, Thums Up stands for adventurous sports, those which encourage you to be yourself and let go off your fears! All the sports that we portray in the Thums Up ads are recognized ones, those which can be done by anyone. But yes, we do fictionalize them a bit. One of the most famous ads of Thums Up, features Akshay Kumar performing a sport called Parkour. Parkour is a training discipline that has developed from the military obstacle course training. Practitioners aim to get from A to B in the most efficient way possible - this is done using only the human body and the surroundings. Thus, in the ad we had Akshay jumping from one building to another and then, he comes to the moving truck and grabs his Thums Up bottle. It is one of the most famous sports in the world; it originated in Japan and travelled to USA and UK.

The core idea of the sport is, that you run without fear. That all hurdles are mental if you tackle them mentally. That, the human body is designed to be so flexible that it can achieve the impossible. There is a science to this sport. The fearlessness and the adventure were a perfect fit for the brand. Akshay Kumar proved to be a perfect match of this sport; he is one of the fittest guys - very outdoorsy and aerodynamic.

We took him to Sydney, where he got fifteen days of training in Parkour. All the stunts have been performed by him. In some stunts, we have used safety harnesses, since it

was not worth taking a risk. In merely fifteen days, he picked up the sport really well. For the South version of this ad, Mahesh babu did it.

Soon in Bollywood, he began doing comedy films too, and we used this character shade of his, in the 'Race' ad of Thums Up. In that ad, all the bad guys challenge him for a bike race, to which he agrees. Soon, as the race begins, everyone rides their bikes, while he stands there and turning to a girl, says, "Bachhe toh chale gaye, aur aap?". His comic timing makes it a very entertaining commercial. As I talk of Akshay and Thums Up, I have to mention this special incident, wherein he went out of the way and did something wonderful for the brand.

It was at the launch of "Khatron Ke Khiladi", where Thums Up was the sponsor for that year. Akshay was going to perform a live stunt. He was to drive a car, which goes turtle, blasts and catches fire. Yet, he was to emerge from it safely. There were 220 cameras covering this event; the entire media was present. The location was Film City. Before the stunt, Akshay came to **Wasim Basir** of Coca Cola and me, saying, "Pops! Abhi mein kuch karnewala hoon!" A bit taken aback, I asked, "What?" To which he replied, "Aap dekho" and left. Firstly, he showed the car to the audience, drove it around, explained the stunt and then said, "Before every stunt I perform, I am not sure if I will survive ... so, I always do something my mother has taught me, i. e. to chant the Gayatri Mantra. I won't mind if you want to join me!" and he began chanting it.

I thought this was it! This is what he was talking about when he said, "Abhi mein kuch karne wala hoon". But there was more! He went to the car and began with the stunt. The car turned turtle, caught fire and out he walked of it. It was then, that I saw him reaching for something ... he had tucked a Thums Up bottle in his pocket! Removing it, he opened it and took a sip! This particular act wasn't even scripted. It was his whim and generosity towards the brand. After drinking it, he addressed the audience, "Itni garmi se aya hoon ... kuchh toh chahiye nah fresh hone ke liye!" He came to me then and said, "Dekha! I gave you free publicity!"

Such is his love and commitment for the brand!

This brings me to the anecdotes of the third Khan of Bollywood - Shahrukh Khan. One of his early work involves the famous, "Dare to Wear Black" ad of Clinic All Clear shampoo. Priti Nair tells us about her experience of working with Shahrukh for this ad.

'Dho Daala'

'We had already crafted a successful siries for Clinic All Clear ads, which was the 'Dho Daala' campaign. The next step, was to come up with yet another interesting campaign. While we were at it, ***Harish Nandani*** *the client, felt that the line "Dandruff ko dho daala" has garnered considerable popularity and thus, it should be carried forward in the new set of ads also. Thus, we clubbed the idea "Dare to wear black" and "Dho Daala".* ***Shahrukh Khan*** *was brought on board for the new campaign.'*

You had come up with two very popular ads, what were they?

'The first ad was where he is in front of the mirror and is dreaming about an award function. He has a bottle of Clinic All Clear is in his hands and he drops it! Alas! He is left with no shampoo. He then says, "Clinic All Clear nahin to kaale kapde nahin! Kaale kapde nahi toh Safed kapde!" and then imagines himself in ***Jitendra****'s white attire, dancing on the spoof of the song "Tohfa, Tohfa". Then he says, "Safed nahin toh rang be rangi" and we find him in the attire of* ***Govinda;*** *dancing on one of his spoofed songs. Finally he says, "Rang be rangi nahin ... toh kapde hi nahin' and we see him without a shirt, dancing on a* ***Salman Khan*** *number. At the end, we realize that he was having a nightmare. He finally gets up to see a bottle full of Clinic All Clear and kisses it repeatedly!*

In the last shot, we have him sitting on a chair, all happy, when some crew-members hand him over a gaudy red sherwani saying, "Sir aaj ka costume" and he says, "Dho dala". The second one is like a sequel, where he is actually at the award function; you find a duplicate of his there. They have a dance face-off, both throw their jackets to the audience, with one of it

coming back, as it has dandruff on it! The real one is recognized. At the end, Shahrukh says, "Dho Dala".'

What was his reaction when he heard the scripts?

'He laughed heartily and then, just shared two issues. First, he says, that for playing the Salman Khan shot, he will not be bare-bodied, as he had promised ***Gauri,*** *that he will not feature bare-bodied on screen. Hence, we made him wear a ganji. Also, he did not want the dandruff to be shown on him. We used isabgul as dandruff. So, I told him that we will not show him - all that we were showing was a shoulder. So, he finally agreed!'*

Any on the shoot incidents?

'Once Shahrukh agreed to come on board, we scheduled the shoot. Sabal Shekhawat was the Director for the first Clinic All Clear ad. We had put up the entire set and were ready to shoot by 9:00 PM, but there was no sign of him. He hadn't come till 12:00 midnight and there was acute panic on the sets. Finally, we see him arrive. He looked all worn out, extremely ill and had immense cold. He said, "I think, I won't be able to shoot". We did not know what to do! ***Atul Kasbekar****, the famous photographer was also present on the sets, since we were to finish the stills on the same day. He approached Shahrukh and convinced him to shoot. Once Shahrukh was behind the camera, he underwent a complete transformation. He just didn't look like the man who had entered the sets all worn-out a while back. He was to deliver a sixty second long dialogue, which he did seamlessly. We shot till four in the morning.*

He did a genuinely heart-felt job! He enthusiastically played all the three characters. For the second film, the Director was ***Deven Khote. Farah Khan*** *did the entire dance direction. Even during the second film, he was suffering from an acute knee injury and yet, he arrived at the sets at 8:00 PM and we shot straight through the night, wrapping up at eight in the morning. His leg was paining. He used to keep getting into a pain pang and sit for a while, but hats off to his commitment, he shot*

without any cribbing. Pops! One more thing I have to mention here. In the first ad, you see him kissing the Clinic All Clear bottle repeatedly. It was actually Shahrukh's idea. I could not even think of scripting it out of the fear … that how can I make a star do something like this! But he did it on his own!'

Tell us a bit more about Shahrukh Khan

"He has quite a unique personality; a complete people's person. Usually, when you have stars on the set, they refuse to give autographs and photographs by postponing it. They also have this entourage of people protecting them. But Shahrukh, he just doesn't seem to mind obliging ever. For the dubbing of the ad, I remember, he insisted he will do his dubbing and came to the studio on his own. There were two laborers, who wanted his autograph and photograph, which he happily gave. For this I remember, he gave me a very wonderful explanation; said he, "See I am aware I am a very ugly person. I know, I am not a good-looking guy and therefore, I am very insecure. Thus, for me even today, when somebody recognizes me in the car - it is the biggest high for me. Because, I don't know how have I made it so big!" 'Pops he also is very grateful and remembers people for their support.

During the making of this ad, he insisted we get his suits done from a place called Masculine Tailors, because the tailor had helped him a lot, during his struggling days. He had stitched free suits for him, when he did not have any money and was looking for work. Now, that SRK has made it big, he still gets his suits stitched from Masculine tailors. He is such a grounded person.'

I could completely relate to what Priti shared, my experience of working with Shahrukh Khan has been no different. I worked closely with him for the DHFL ads and it was a sheer pleasure to work with him. DHFL, the second-largest housing finance company; we were to craft the ads for the brand. The focus of the ads was to instill pragmatism in people, when it came to buying a house. Often, people postpone buying a house because they are looking for their dream home; the ideal home! But a dream is often a challenge

to chase, in which the pragmatism of owning a house in your own name - an achievable feat, is lost. So we wanted to tell the people, that a person close to you will always tell you, "Big or small, it doesn't matter ... your dream of having a house in your name should be fulfilled now." Because this brings in security for your family.

To communicate this message across, we decided to bring in Shahrukh Khan. Not as a star but as somebody, who has come up in life, taking the hard way. He knows the value of buying the first house. We wanted him to play an elder brother's role and give people a selfless advice, about realistically buying what they can buy. The insight was that even if it is small, it is your own house, which is a greater happiness than living in a rented house.

We approached Shahrukh with this idea and he gladly agreed to do the ad. We told him that we don't want you to be a celebrity, we want to you to be very real - like a brother, who is giving his younger one a piece of wise advice. He had to be humble, approachable and friendly. Visually, we showed him in the house of those people, who were having a casual conversation about buying a home. In the conversation, he was to say, "Bada ho ya chota, Sapna to sapna hota hai; aur bangla ho ya ghosla, apna ghar aakhir apna hota hai". He was to sign off with , "Ghar jaisa loan". Shahrukh loved the idea.

For this ad, we wanted him to sport a light stubble - like the one he had in Swades. That could not happen, because he was in midst of shooting some films, which required him to be clean shaved.

In this siries of ads, we required Shahrukh to interact with a lot of families. Managing these people became a task, as everyone had brought someone with them to see and meet Shahrukh. They would approach Shahrukh, when he was about to give a take, or disturb him in middle of something. The actors' and their relatives, they all wanted autographs, photographs, selfies amidst other fan-fare. Usually, Shahrukh obliges to all; it's his uncanny ability to switch from interacting with fans to being back in character. Though we requested a number of times, but the fans were turning a deaf ear. Gosh! It was indeed a nightmare.

We followed up with yet another idea for DHFL, wherein we focused on the excuses people make, to postpone buying a home - "Let me get promotion", "Let the property rates fall", "Llet the interest rates fall" and at the end, they regret the procrastination. In this ad campaign, we added a bit of humor and made Shahrukh mimic people, from different parts of the country, with their excuses. He is seen to be speaking like a Gujarati, Punjabi, South Indian, Maharashtrian and a Parsi. During the shoot of this series, he was injured, but being a thorough professional, he came for the shoot and completed it; despite him limping. He said, "It doesn't matter, as in the film, I simply have to sit and speak". He came a little late, apologized and completed the film by midnight and then left for Hyderabad, for another shoot. Nitesh Tiwari wrote the dialogues for this ad, and directed both the ads.

Yet another amazing quality, which he possesses is, that while rehearsing the lines, he also makes mental notes about how each style that he is mimicking, would act, and then he does a small practice and shows it to us. Following this, he asked if it required any additions, edits or changes. I mean, he is a great actor and yet, he seeks feedback!

Adding to these experiences with Shahrukh Khan, my dear friend KS Chakravarty aka Chax, shares the stories attached to the Airtel ad, which featured him. Chax begins by saying, *'Shahrukh Khan is an extremely committed individual! So much so, that we have shot four ads in a day with him.'*

This was for which ad? Share some details

'This was for the Airtel "Praji Yaji" ad, where he played a double role. For the ad, he was to don four different looks. He came for the shoot at 11:00 AM and we were to shoot in the daylight. So as he arrived, I asked him would we finish today. To this, he replied, "Don't worry, I'll finish but even if we don't ... I'll come again tomorrow. But, on one condition, that you don't tell the client this, because I cannot give them a free day. Just between you and me ... if we don't finish today, I'll come tomorrow and we will quietly shoot and go!" He is extremely committed and professional. For the same ad, during the dubbing, he was scheduled to meet us at 12:30 PM at the studio. At 12:30, we received a message from him, which read - "Tell Chax, I am sorry but I am delayed and will come by 4:00 PM and then explain the delay. But I will come and dub." He came in at 4:30 PM and we dubbed properly and as usual, he gave as many takes as we required.

After the dubbing was over, he came to me and said, "I am really sorry! Day before yesterday, we had got my son a Pug ... and yesterday, someone from my place ran a car over it. There was no way we could tell the same to my son and thus, I told him that the puppy had gone somewhere ... and would be back soon. In that short frame of time, I had to arrange for another puppy ... one that was exactly like that pug and I found it in USA. Somebody got it for me but the customs did not allow it outside the Airport. When they discovered it was mine, they said I have to personally come to the Airport and get it released from the quarantine. I had no option but go to the Airport. I was standing there for the last four hours and I finally got the puppy released ... took it home and came here!' It was quite an incident Pops!'

As for the Airtel ad, you have also worked with AR Rahman right?

'Yes! And he is another gentleman! We were shooting for the Airtel corporate film, one which had two kids playing football at the border. Prakash Varma was the Director. We made the film and I also had prepared a rough music track with ***Clinton****, which was extremely good. When suddenly, the client said that* ***AR Rahman*** *was available to do the track for this film. I said, "I don't need Rahman for the track, because the role of the track in the film is minimal; it being more of a story." All I wanted, was a simple background sound, and end with the Airtel tune. The client was adamant and insisted that I meet Rahman once and see. And that, if at the end, I don't like the track, I can go back to my original plan. I agreed, but unfortunately when I was scheduled to meet Rahman in Mumbai, he was in Goregaon and I was in Parle. I couldn't reach on time and he did something based on a half-hearted brief provided by someone. Thus, the track was going somewhere else and the film somewhere else. Hence, it was not used.*

The client asked me about not using Rahman's track; even Prakash called and said that Rahman had enquired about the track. So, yet again, I was convinced to meet Rahman. I was flown all the way to Chennai, where we met at his studio and had a long chat about music and the Tamil scene. Finally, he asked about the Airtel track. I told him, "See Rahman, no one can tell you what is good or bad - when it comes to music. But there is a certain story and feel to this ad, which requires minimal musical treatment". He replied, "OK! That approach is also good; we can do that ... just show me what you want in various places". So I played the film and told him. He redid the track and it turned out to be fantastic. But the story doesn't end here - I loved the Rahman track, set the ad onto it and shared it with my client Gopal Vithal. He saw the ad, called back and said, "Yaar! Chax this is not so good. We will stick to the earlier version where Clinton had done a piece."

I was dumbstruck and I tried convincing him otherwise, but he kept denying. So I told him, "Do one thing ... when you get up tomorrow morning, play the latest Rahman wala track fifty times and then take a break. Then play the old track and the new track one after the other ... and then tell me which one do you like better! The reason you are not liking this newness is because you have got used to the old track, as you have been sitting on it for two months." The next morning he called and said "Hey

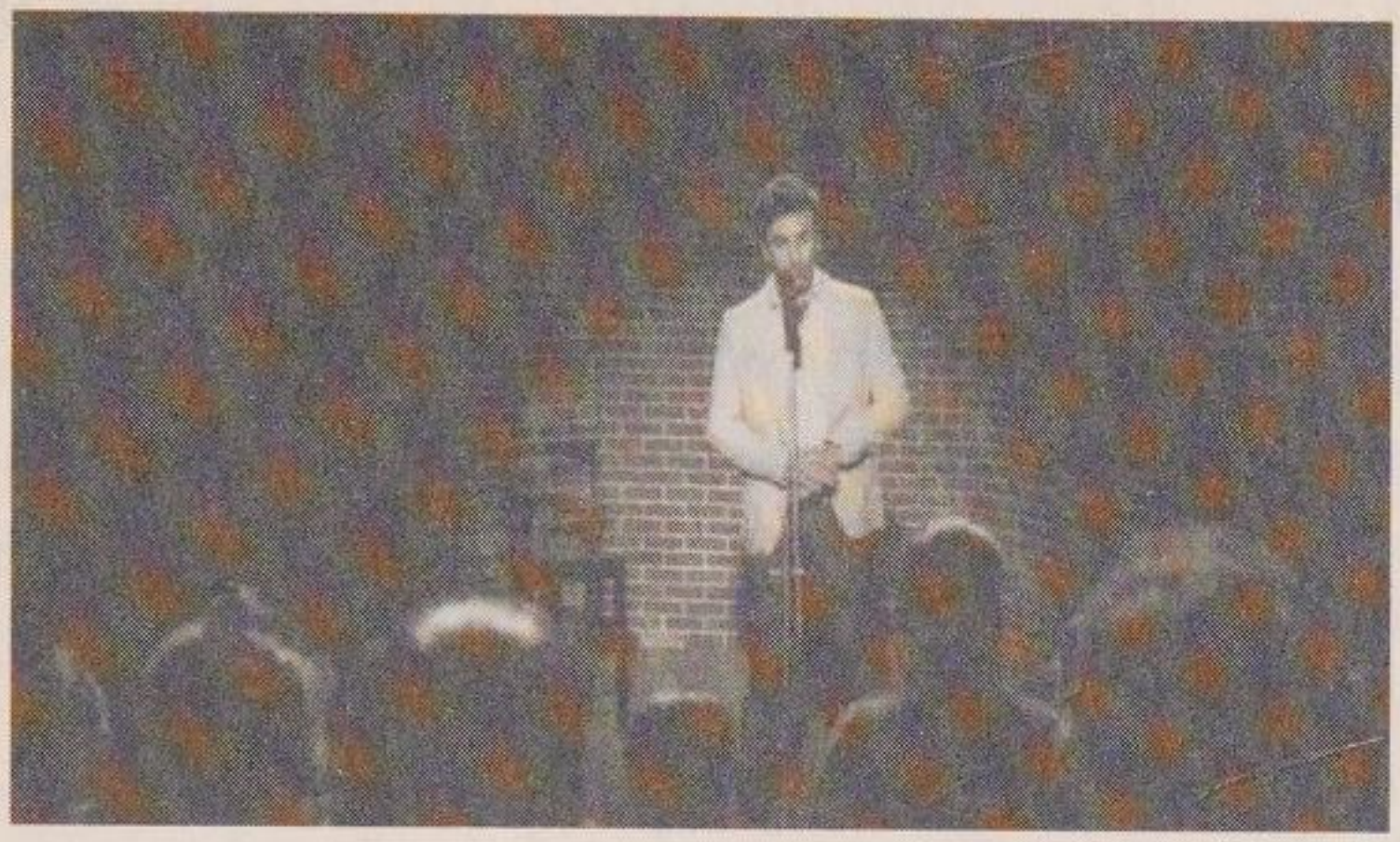
Chax! The Rahman piece is superb yaar!" But all through this experience, Rahman was completely cool and sweet; not one bit hassled.

As Chax and I talk about celebrities and their professionalism, he unfailingly mentions Ranbir Kapoor and doles out the stories that unfolded during the shoot of the "Docomo" ads.

A Stand-up Guy

Chax, I avidly remember the Docomo ads, one in which Ranbir Kapoor does a stand-up comedy act and the other, in which he plays an old man. The ads were really well received and loved. Tell us about your experience of working with Ranbir.

'Pops! He is a phenomenal guy! It all started three years after the launch of Docomo. In their third year, Docomo wanted to do something big, especially with IPL being round the corner. They also wanted ***Ranbir Kapoor*** *as the endorser. So I went and met Ranbir; a really cool and smart guy. He agreed to come on board. Now the challenge was that Ranbir is a youth icon and we wanted to talk to and address a slightly older age group; one who was using post-paid connections. The question was how do we use Ranbir and strike a chord with the target audience. Yet another challenge was the time frame, we had to keep in mind the forty-five days of IPL and come up with something fresh continually. These two challenges, led to the idea of presenting Ranbir in the stand-up comedian format and to keep changing the content. This idea worked really well. And here, I must specially mention, that Ranbir is an amazing actor and very committed. We shot forty-three ads in just two days. He did them back to back, with hardly any retakes!'*



Forty-three ads in two days is quite a feat! Chax, then how did the ad where Ranbir plays an old guy happen?

'That was the year after the stand-up comedy ads. We sought to change the format. Also, the client had told us very specifically, what they wanted to say. The idea was that if the restaurant, which you regularly visit starts treating you shabbily, will you continue to go to the same restaurant? No! Then why continue with your telecom operator! It was Docomo's take on the current service levels of other telecom operators. So I briefed Ranbir about the ad, where we told him that he will be playing a gruff Udupi restaurant owner. To which, he said that he cannot carry off a gruff Udupi restaurant owner; that he can carry off an Udupi restaurant boy, wearing a chaddi but that won't be correct … because what an owner can say, a waiter cannot. . Instead, he suggested him becoming an old man! He went on to show his stills from the movie "Barfi", where he plays an old guy towards the end. It completely made sense and hence, I agreed.

Thus, it was his suggestion that we cast him as an old man, who is the owner of a restaurant. Even for this ad, we shot eight ads in two days and that was brutal for him. His entire body and face was padded up. We could not turn on the air-conditioner when the make-up was on; he was sweating and yet, he did not fret a bit. More so, usually the stars, after their part is done,

want to leave immediately. Someone else gives other actors the cues, but Ranbir would stay back and give other actors their cues. He was there from the morning till the evening, for both the days, donning that costume and make-up and sweating!'

I heard, you also made him do an underwater shoot, even though he is really scared of water?

'Oh Yes! That was for the Hero Honda corporate film. The opening was shot in Mumbai and the rest in Yugoslavia. The opening scene had Ranbir under-water, in a swimming pool. He was shown to be drowning. Then he gets released and comes out. I remember Pops, that your daughter Samhitha, she is a huge fan of Ranbir and had told me that whenever I plan to shoot with Ranbir, I must take her along. So I had taken her along for the old man shoot, wherein she took his autograph and some photographs ... but back then, he was in his costume. So, for this ad, I asked her come along as he would have been in his own cool avatar. I told her that this time, he will be in a swim-suit and the moment she heard this, she began squealing - "No! No! No! Chakra mama you can't do this please! Ranbir is scared of water! Don't do this! He is terrified of water, you can't put him under-water!"

I was a bit taken aback and asked her to calm down; we would see what unfurled. We met Ranbir and I asked, "She is telling me that you are scared of water! Is it true?" He nodded and said, "Please don't remind me of that! If I have to do it, I have to do it! I'll do it; I'll just act like I am not scared!" Worried, I said, "We can cheat a bit with the cameras ...", to this, he simply refused and replied, "Just ensure that I am pulled out in time, that's it!" And Pops! He did a brilliant job. He is a thorough professional, even in Yugoslavia, he did all the stunts himself and it included some pretty hair raising stunts!'

Before we sign out on the Docomo ads, one thing that I want to know is, how did its tune get made - it is quite an interesting one!

'Initially, Docomo had thought of getting the tune done from ***Shankar Ehsaan and Loy.*** *The music, the tune is a very valuable*

property for a telecom service provider, because it is linked with the ringing of the phone. When they approached Shankar Ehsaan and Loy, they found out that Shankar was unavailable since he was travelling. I voiced my discomfort, as the three are at their best, when they are as a collaborative unit. And with Shankar not there for the melody, I was a bit hesitant. The client was like, then who? I suggested ***Ram Sampat.*** *At that time Ram wasn't so big. But he finally did the Docomo signature tune and it turned out to be phenomenal.'*

Quite often, we look at the exteriors and attempt to judge the person and his/her persona. I realized this, when I got an opportunity to work with Sunny Deol. His on-screen avatars and personality are that of a tough, angry guy but when I met him, I was pleasantly surprised to know him. All this unfolded, while we were doing the ad for Lux Cozy.

The Darling Deol

This was during the campaign of "Lucky Banyan" for Lux Cozy. The insight that we had anchored onto, was that in life, we all tend to get a bit superstitious and have our lucky clothes and lucky coins. Those days, Sunny Deol was a huge attraction amongst kids, because he has an innocent face and good body. We used this image and popularity and weaved three ads around it - "Lucky Banyan", "Dhaai Kilo Ka Haath" and "Apna Luck Pehen Ke Chalo".

Sunny Deol is a celeb himself and also the son of a huge celebrity. We hear so much about them from the outside circuit, that we tend to build a pre-conceived notion. Honestly, I don't quite like movie-stars and star-kids; they have this snobbish attitude and often, they treat you like a lesser mortal. But this entire notion faded into oblivion when I met him.

I met Sunny, when he was shooting for some other ad-film. He had agreed to see me and listen to the scripts of Lux Cozy. After a short wait, I joined him in his vanity van. He turned out to be so humble. He made me comfortable and offered me refreshments. He was extremely shy, well mannered and soft-spoken; it was as if I was meeting a perfectly disciplined and cultured little child. I asked him about him managing to

say such heavy-duty, high decibel dialogues in his films. He earnestly replied, "It's what the director tells me to do. Now you have come to do this film with children ... I will happily do it as per your vision. Our job is to entertain people." He was so humble, he knew that a senior advertising person is coming to meet him. Also, seeing that I am elder to him, he was unfailingly respectful. And during the shoot, I figured he was great with kids too.

Let us move on to the pretty ladies of Bollywood now!

Divas in advertising

Yet another star kid who defies the conventional image is Kareena Kapoor. Priti Nair and I have some experiences, those which reflect her professionalism.

Priti narrating her overall experience with Kareena said, *'Kareena Kapoor is a pleasure to shoot with, she is absolutely hassle free. I did the Anne French and Emami Boro Plus ads with her. She is a sweetheart on the sets; she will do everything you ask her to do. She will keep asking you, "How do you want me to hold the product - is this okay?" She completely respects the work assigned to her and delivers like a thorough professional.'*

I completely agree with Priti on this! I have worked with her for the "Limca; Pyaas Badhao" ad. Limca as a drink, has a very family appeal. It is more universal in nature. We wanted a celebrity who pushes the next generation to do something more. She is someone who is looked up to, is young and an inspiration. Thus, we zeroed on to Kareena Kapoor as she is a more likeable figure. She has risen up, not because of her surname but because she is uber talented. As an individual, she is quite ambitious and has done experimental roles. This makes her an iconic person amongst the youth. Thus, she fitted the "Pyaas badhao" campaign perfectly, as it urged the youth to have more ambitions and not to be satisfied with something small.

Thus, when I met her, I told her, 'You are not a model! You are not an endorser! You are not even a role model! You are actually a senior in college ... or an elder sister, who tells the next generation not to be satisfied with what you have ... but to

aim for a little more!' She was very happy to play a meaningful role in an advertisement and immediately gave her dates.

Priety Fresh!

As we talk about likeability, **Priety Zinta** has been adored for her cute, bubbly self. Her ads like the Perk Hunger Strike and Liril are still remembered. I speak to Ram Madhvani, the director of the Liril ad that featured Priety Zinta. A gripping conversation ensued.

'You did two Liril ads and one of them, featured Priety Zinta. People loved that ad and this made Priety the second Liril girl after Karen Lunel. You managed to capture the essence of her personality.'

The core essence of Priety's persona is her spontaneity and my job was to bring that out, making it the "fresh" appeal of Liril. So, I simply decided upon a cluster of shots - playing the guitar by using a leaf, jumping here and frolicking there. I explained her the visuals, which I had in mind and then left it on her. She was extremely good; we just rolled the camera and she went on with her act, with us capturing what we required. **Which waterfall did you shoot at?**

'Pops! Unlike the older Liril film, we did the entire ad in a studio! The waterfall you see in the film is recreated in a set.'

That is unbelievable!, It is a set! Why? How?

'When ***Usha Bhandarkar*** *asked me to make the Liril ad, I told her that I am not very comfortable with waterfalls, owing to my fear of heights. So I made up the act. I decided, to create a Hawaii kind of a feel. It was a real challenge. We had bought forty tankers of water with huge pumps. It took about two days just to get the lighting correct. It took more than two weeks for the sets to be made, with all the flora-fauna.* ***Nitesh Roy*** *and* ***Imran*** *had made the sets. We needed a huge set and hence, we shot at Filmalaya Studios. One good thing was that we could control the force of the fall, making it easier for Priety. It was an act pure madness, because when I took it, I had no clue if it would be possible!'*

As I talk of Bollywood celebrities and their romance with advertising, I need to talk about a mirror that reflects the entire Bollywood and it's happening: Although not a living celebrity, it is the quintessential part of the B-Town – 'Bombay Times Supplement'. The paper has been the one-point read for all Bollywood events and people. As Agnello Dias rightly puts it, Bombay Times is Born Glamorous. I speak to Agnello about the revolutionary ad that he had crafted for this glam filled newspaper!

The Glam Factor!

"The genesis of the line and idea 'Born Glamorous'?"

"The brief we were given was very simple, we don't want to be defensive, we are unapologetic that we are glamorous. To this brief I added an interesting layer of insight."

"What was that insight?"

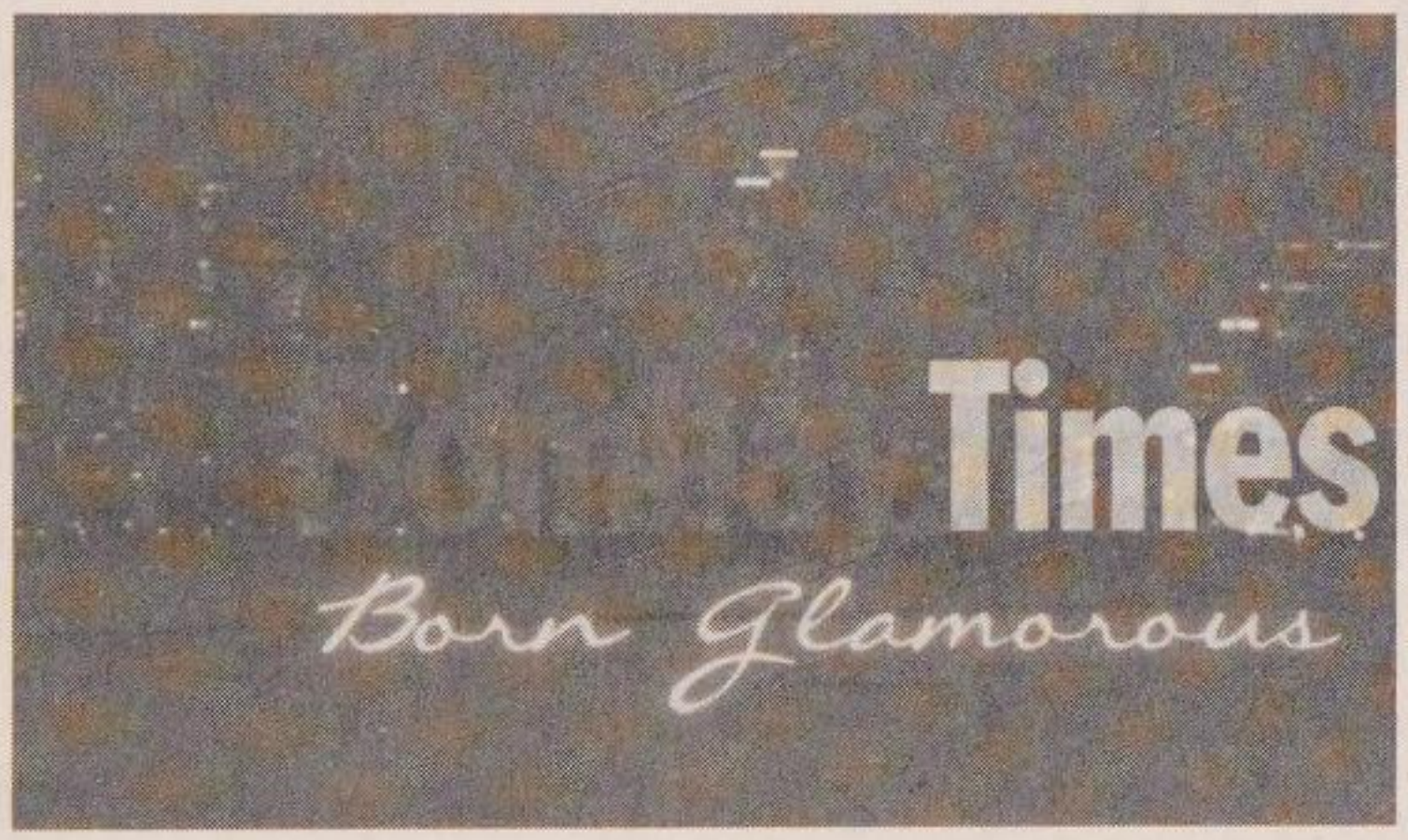
"Pops! If you see the urban set up proliferating around us now, you will notice that the people of the lower strata residing in urban towns like Mumbai are undergoing a change. Small elements about them, their fashion sense and personal grooming aesthetics has come at par with us, earlier it wasn't so. And at the same time the rise of Bombay times and Page 3 culture was unfolding. I am not saying that these people read Bombay Times, but they are part of the changing culture. I simply exaggerated this insight to communicate that anybody can be stylish and coined a line, 'Style mara to darna kya'. And thus we had dressed up models in high end fashionable couture and they all played the role of the lower strata people, we had an Autowala, the gas cylinderwala and so on."

"Any interesting incident that happened during the shoot?"

"I have one very interesting anecdote that portrays the irony of what we do in our jobs. In the ad there was a shot of shiny shoes amongst a group of other shoes. We arranged all ordinary shoes around the blingy one so that it stands out. But somehow we were not able to get the frame right, since the shot was of

a very short duration and in that time frame the stylish shoes had to strike. So to make them stand out, we needed extremely contrasting shoes which are all worn out and dirty and guess whose sandals we used, mine! I mean for an ad on glamour, you are using your own shoes as a contrast."

"Aggie this particular incidence reminds me of yet another episode. Long back the two of us, you and I had gone to the Bata showroom to buy shoes for me and the salesman was showing something and I said no not this one, show me other one and I pointed towards another pair. Pat came his reply, 'Woh tumhare liye nahi hai, tumko parvadega nahi' (That pair isn't for you, you won't be able to afford it). And on listening to this you began laughing!"



Apart from Bollywood yet another slice of celebrities dominate the advertising pie – Cricketers. Cricket is close to a religion in our country we nearly worship the sport. And have loved ads that have featured cricketers ever since the Only Vimal times. We as audience have always found it fascinating to see this non-playing, off the field side of our beloved cricketers in ads. Thus to complete this celeb and ad journey I hand pick ads that have featured cricketers in the most memorable ways. You will read incidences of everyone right from Sachin

Tendulkar to Rahul Dravid and Virender Sehwag so brace yourself as I bring to you all the off-field, in ads action!

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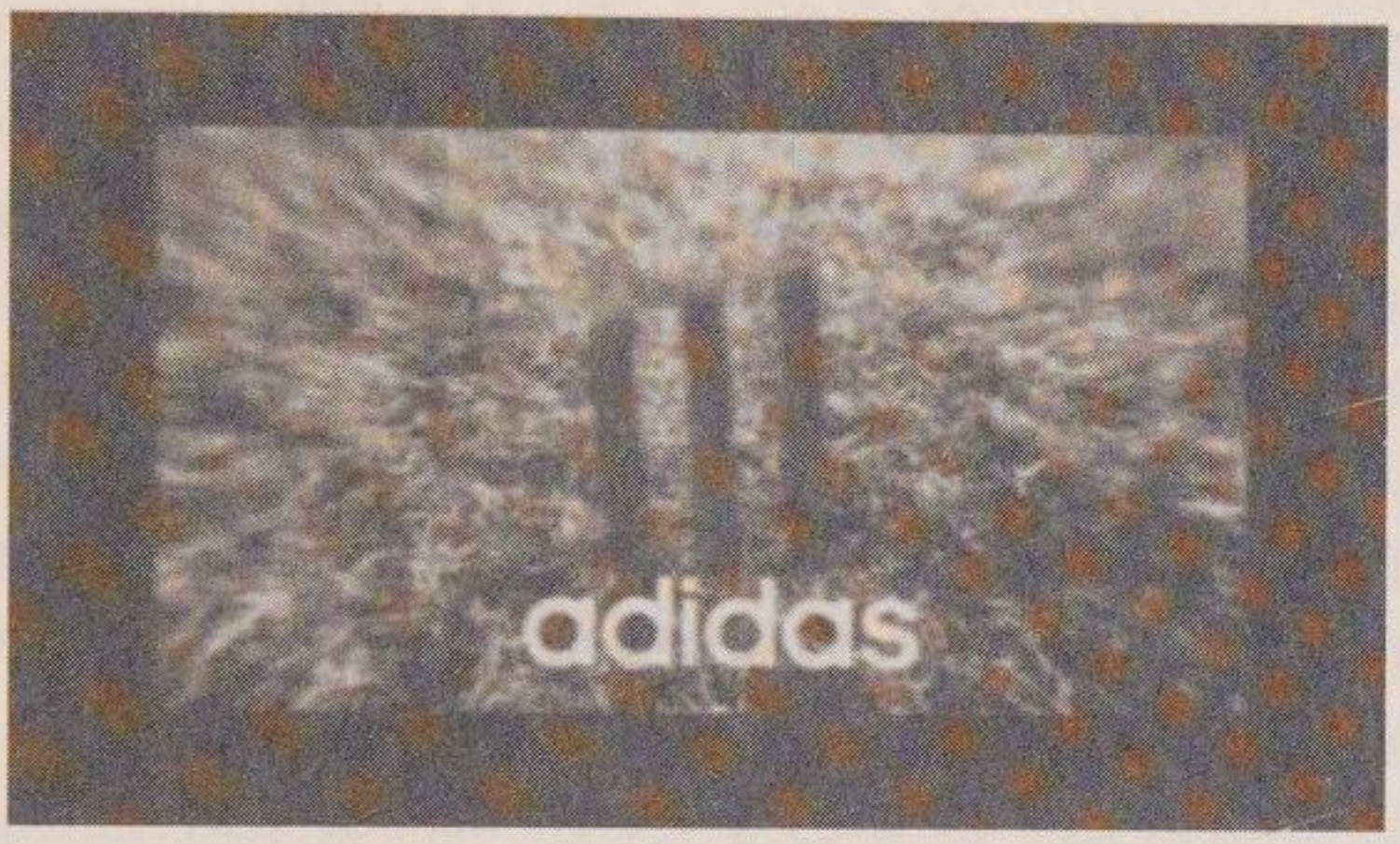
The Religion & its God

Cricket as a word is synonymous to him and thus, I am compelled to start with the stories of "The God of cricket - Sachin Tendulkar". What he is has made him so loved, that practically every brand under the sun wanted him to endorse them. We have seen him do a slew of ads but there are some, in which his presence and the idea have fused together so beautifully, making those ads legendary!

Of the many, the first I explore is the Adidas ad, where the moment before Sachin hits a shot, is captured in the most aesthetic way possible. This is followed by his shot and then the rejoicement which spreads with him. I choose this craft as the first in the line, simply because it was the first attempt to reflect the "God" status of Sachin Tendulkar! The craftsman; Ram Madhvani takes us through the most fascinating story of ad making!

The Adidas ad came at a time when Sachin Tendulkar was at his peak. He was the one who had given India an image when the country was in a flux. Tell us about the ad?



To answer this question, Ram dabbled in a ten minute monologue. Before he began, he said, *"Pops! Now this is going to be a ten minute monologue; you know my friends call me Ramayan not Ram … and now, you will know why!"* The next ten minutes were truly engaging. I was delighted because a sense of pride that it instilled within me. As I heard about the hard-word and thought process that goes beyond making a magnificent thirty seconder, I felt truly inspired. I present to you, his amazing monologue!

'This was the first ad film which Adidas was making in India. Three scripts were given to me, of which the one that we made was the worst of all. Well, this is in my view and the agency also, did not want to make it… It was a one-liner script, "Last ball of the over … Sachin was to hit a six! The people are watching him on television screens, like the way people watch outside television showrooms". They wanted me to pitch for this ad, for there was another production house pitching for the ad. In my life, I have only pitched for two films - Adidas and Happydent. So I pitched, and they wanted me to do the ad film.

Further on, as wisdom would have it, the worst script did the best in the research phase, thereby becoming "the script". Now I was in a fix; unsure of what to do! I said to myself, "Arey yaar! I didn't want to do this script ... it is a one liner; no brainer." But then, I realized one issue – that I and more of the advertising fraternity suffers from - I call it "The tyranny of idea"! Often, we advertising people hide behind ideas so much, that we don't realize that at the end, the audience is watching an ad film and not an idea. The audience is interested in the 'Rasa'; the reverberations, in the sheer feeling that the film creates. It isn't about what is being said, how it is being said - but more so, about the audience feel. I think, I achieved this in the Adidas ad! I traversed beyond the tyranny of idea and made a film which is only about reverberations.

Pops! I also had a personal reason to do so! Back then, I felt that the ad industry wasn't taking me seriously! I wasn't yet considered to be an A-List director. I was truly frustrated with my position in the industry and I am talking of a time, which was characterized by my lesser competition. I had a dream ... that if ever, a book on Indian directors would be written, I did not want to be a mere footnote - I wanted to be a chapter in it. I knew, something, somewhere was going wrong! Thus, to find an answer, I exiled myself and went to a farmhouse in Kodaikanal. It belongs to a friend of mine; I stayed there for ten days, introspecting. Finally, I got an answer! That what was lacking, was a signature style. I said to myself, "From now on, every ad film that comes my way, will have a special "visual language". I am not going to rely on actors; I am going to do things that are visually poetic. This will be my signature. When the industry sees my film, they should say, "Yeh toh Ram ki film hai". While Iagree the journey wasn't entirely smooth, but the peak of that journey were the Adidas and Happydent ads'.

When Adidas came my way, I was on the visual language journey, where I didn't rely on the actor and neither the script. It was going to be more about lighting and the lens. . The entire ad for me was about – "Sachin look here, turn, come closer to the camera, and go back and just that! Nothing else".

While I was doing this, I was also aware of my strengths and weaknesses. I am really bad when it comes to technology. But at the same time, I have this knack where I can see films. I am one of those few people, who can see a film and not allow technology to hand-cuff me. So the vision I had for the Adidas ad, was to create the "edge of the seat" feeling; one that everyone has experienced in their life, atleast once! I had realized that this feeling had a word in the English dictionary – Ellipsis; it's the three dots, and it's a dramatic pause! The inspiration of the ellipsis feel was Ramanand Sagar's "Ramayana". Do you remember how when it was aired on television, the entire nation would come to a standstill? I also used a Sanskrit sholka as the background, to create reverberations ... the feeling of Rasa!

To cultivate this ellipsis feel, I took inspiration from a guy; Dayton Taylor who had invented the rig, which would stop time while shooting. I had read about it and it was playing at the back of my mind for the last six to eight months. One fine day, I walked out from my conference room and told my post-production head, ***Parminder Singh Chaddha,*** *"We need fifty cameras and that's what we are going to do with the Adidas film. And I don't want film cameras, I want fifty digibeta cameras." Parminder is a great guy! Without him, I wouldn't be able to pull off all these techie stuffs.*

I went and told about this crazy idea to the agency - about the ellipsis, the dramatic pause and the cameras. Obviously, we had not budgeted for it but it was already running in my system. I had decided to achieve it, no matter what. The agency gave their approval. R. K. Swamy was the agency; ***Pankaj,*** *the creative director and script-writer. A firang too, had come down for the shoot and was a part of the team. He said, "I was in the plane and I was thinking why don't we make a photographic look ... like this ..." and he went on to show me a picture of a native American; his face very close to the camera. It was wide lens but with a very shallow depth of field; his nose was in the focus and his ear was unfocused. In all its contradictions, the picture was truly amazing.*

So I showed it to my cameraman and asked him as to how could we achieve this! He said it was quite simple, that we

needed to put a magnifying glass in front of the lens. After two months of testing, we finally stood at the threshold of the first day of shoot. It was a challenge to align fifty cameras, because one has to get the height, the distance and angle, all correct! . All this was happening for the first time, 50 monitors, 50 digi-beta recorders and numerous cables of those huge machines.

***Vijay Khambati** was the camera-man and he was superb in the technical aspects. It was a herculean task and somehow in the test-phase, we sort of managed to get what we wanted. We also wrote to Dayton Taylor, telling him that this is what we are trying to do. He replied saying, don't even try to do this, why don't you hire my rig! We replied that we could not afford it. .*

Well, apart from the two months of testing on the field, it would take us about eight hours to set up the cameras. It was all done manually. We had three people deployed per camera. We were looking at 150 people just for the cameras. Then, there was the audience. And Pops! Now let me tell you about the craziest thing! At the end of day, after completing the shoot, I said, "OK! I am dismantling the camera set up now! This is it! Have we got everything we wanted?" I also spoke to the client, "If you have anything to say, please voice it now; else forever hold your peace". I say this aloud, thinking I am very Shakespearean in the way I was saying. Pops! That was the last day I have ever said those words, because in response the client said "Yes!, Yes we are very happy". And after I dismantled the cameras, half an hour later, the client said, "But Ram, I am just thinking ... should we have had Sachin's feet a little higher? When he was playing that stroke mid-air?"

I could not hold myself from speaking and finally interrupted his ten minute monologue and said, "What! What did you do then? What did you say?"

'I could have worn my producers hat and said – "I had told you no! ... Forever hold your peace! Why did you not tell me earlier?"But I did not say any of it. Because when this happened, a thought struck me! With that kind of a question,

your conscience gets very troubled and you know that the man in the mirror is going to be troubled for ten … maybe fifteen years, if it does not get an honest answer. So the first thing I did was, that I went to Sachin. He was sitting there changing his shoes. I told him, "Yaar Sachin! I will show you the shot … just look at it and tell me if your feet could be a bit higher!" The rest all was practicalities; what we had to focus here, was on the creative honesty of the question.

What did Sachin say? (I am almost at the edge of my seat)

'Sachin looked at it and said, "Yes! I can get my feet up in the air more". I ran out of the tent. I start shouting, telling everyone, "Wait! Wait! Wait! Don't move the tripods. Although they had already dismantled the cameras, but thankfully, the tripods were in their place. I said, "Wait! Tomorrow morning we will be coming back again. We have a two day shoot here … there are other shots we need to take! We will do this again! Everyone comes back tomorrow at 7:00 AM sharp. It will now take us only three hours instead of eight, since we have the tripods in place. I assumed that the camera alignment will be over by 10:00 AM, and so, I requested Sachin to come back the next day, at 10:00. He said, "Yes! No problems".'

Please tell me next day the shot was taken!

'Next day, Sachin came, got ready and we were ready to roll. He took his position, puts his bat there and it began to rain! We were shooting at Wankhede stadium. Can you believe our luck Pops! The rain was not stopping and there was nothing that one could do! I felt devastated! I was wondering – "How will we get new dates from Sachin? Two months later, I got his dates. By then, I was in a financial mess too!'

What happened in the next two months?

'In those two months, the first thing I did. is to edit what we had managed to capture. I realized, it was not dramatic enough. The light was not good. Sachin's feet were not above the ground … not enough! The camera was not low enough, to render it drama.

So, in the next two months, we conducted more tests and learned from our errors. At the end of those tests, I realized there is a God of cinema ... and that, that God would protect a film done with good intention and honesty. There is a God, because the next time, when we went back to shoot the entire ad, the camera angles were lower; rendering a more dramatic effect. The light was better, because it wasn't the rainy season. All this came together and culminated into a brilliant ad. I realized what had happened was for the good. In those two months, I also figured out the way to shoot the 360 degree shot.'

So, you finally got what you wanted! What was the client's reaction after this version?

'After the shoot, I spent a month editing the film and then, I showed it to the client. I finally told the client about the ellipsis concept and that my intention was to portray Sachin as a God! You know the way ***Michael Jordan*** *as a sports icon is being treated ... like a God! I wondered why we in advertising, don't give our athletes that iconic feel. Pops! When working on ad films, the approach should be that, that the very base thinking should be the common thinking ... while the execution should be sophisticated. For instance, my base thinking here was – "Sachin Bhagwaan hai! Toh agar bhagwan teer marega, toh kya hoga! Likewise Sachin shot marega toh kya hoga!" Then, "Woh teer ya shot, camera ke saamne ayega toh kya hoga? Jab Bhagwaan dikhte hai, toh backlight kaisa hota hai?" This was the thinking! The execution is exactly this; low angle shots, Sachin rotating on a revolving trolley and a halo behind his head!'*

Ram no wonder you are known for your metaphors. You said the background track was a Sanskrit Shloka - did you not face any issue or criticism for using it?

'No Pops! Because the shloka was written by us. We hadn't picked any existing one. We had written the lyrics in Hindi and then hired a Sanskrit expert, who translated it for us. The lyrics

meant – "You are a jewel, when you shine, the country shines with you". Shankar, Ehsan and Loy did the music.'

How did you convince Sachin? It is maddening … fifty cameras and all!

'We didn't have to convince him at all! We went, met him and told him that this is what we intend to do. And he had agreed. I remember, once I was in Indigo for dinner and that's when he also came there. We were meeting after a year or two. I wasn't even sure if he would recognize me. Yet, I went up to him, shyly. He did recognize me and spoke about the ad. I understood that the ad had created an impact on him!'

Any other special compliment?

'Yes! Kind of a long incident. ***Kanan*** *was the guy who was the client representative. He saw the film in my editing studio, at Famous, at about 9:00 in the night. He said, "Ram it is not up to the mark; I don't like it". Pops! I was so mad. So I sat him down, from ten in the night till four in the morning, in my office, talking him through the whole film. He had to catch a flight the next morning, at seven. So at 4:30, I told him, "Now you can go and catch your flight". He had multiple issues with the ad. fifteen years later, on 15 November last year, he sent me a text … and I still have it saved. He wrote, "Hi Ram! Just saw the Sachin ad on YouTube and still feel proud. Thanks for the great ad." I replied, "Hi Kanan, So nice to hear from you … yes, it still is in peoples' memory and that is amazing … given the shelf life of most ads. Thank you for the faith!" He then replied, "Fifteen years and still relevant … and looks contemporary and better than many ads!" I replied, "An act of madness!". Pops! I believe at the end of the day, our job is to be part of the popular culture.'*

Very true; being a part of popular culture is what our job entails. Weaving magic, which the audience loves and they remember for their life. Giving them thirty-second doses of entertainment and being a part of their life! After the magical story of Ram's Adidas ad, yet another spell that was casted using Sachin Tendulkar was the Pepsi – "Sachin Mask" ad.

An ad, where you have kids wearing Sachin Tendulkar's masks and playing. There, one boy gets a box full of Pepsi. Everyone is passing Pepsi to one another, when suddenly – a boy gives the Pepsi to someone … who removes his mask and it is Sachin Tendulkar in person! Prahlad Kakkar tells us the recipe to this magic.

'The ad was lying with us for a long time. I was very keen on doing the ad; so I insisted we do it. They had tight budgets and I said we will manage, but we must make it! Finally, the client agreed. I told Sachin that I would just need him for half an hour, to which he agreed. The next important thing was to find a location to shoot. We looked for one month. I wanted a tree for sure, and we found it at the back of Aarey Milk Colony. I don't know why, but whenever I closed my eyes and visualized the ad, I saw a stunted tree and finally, I had found it. There was a small basti in the vicinity and I decided to cast them for the ad.'

Did the client approve of it?

'They were hesitant at first; asking why the basti kids! As they were not the target audience. So, I argued saying, who had bigger dreams? That an ad isn't just about the product and its target group … it is also about insight. They finally agreed, after much persuasion and said, "Do what you feel is right". So I

went ahead and casted those kids and made sure, that they wore clean clothes. ***Kenny*** *was the director of the ad film. I will tell you a little trick that we played at the shoot. We did not tell the kids that Sachin was going to come! We made Sachin wear his own mask. I told the camera-man, that he had just one chance to capture this reality. As soon as Sachin removed his mask, all the reactions we got to see, were real. They just couldn't believe that Sachin would come and stand with them. There was a very cute moment … a kid literally went and touched Sachin, to see if he was real! After we shot the ad, we felt something was missing and we realized it was the music; we needed a song. We flew in* ***Raghuvir Yadav*** *for the music from Madhya Pradesh. And yes! We went over budget!'*

So what was the client's reaction?

'The client saw it once and said, "Guys what can I say? This is amazing!" They ran the ad for seven years.'

Any more experiences with Sachin?

'Yes! Two more ads - one for Pepsi, which also featured Shahrukh. And one for Britannia. Let me tell you about the Pepsi ad first. We had shot it at the Ramoji Studio in Hyderabad. I remember, we had shot through the night and some parts were shot in the morning. In the first part of the ad, we didn't have Sachin; just Shahrukh. In the last part, Sachin tells Shahrukh, as he is about to go to the ground, "I will take it from here", he takes the Pepsi from Shahrukh, instead of the bat. This was actually Sachin's idea. Originally, it was scripted that he would take the bat. But Sachin said, that taking the Pepsi instead, will be more fun! And so, we did that!'

And as for the Britannia Ad? If I am not wrong, it was your kid who was featured in the ad with Sachin?

'My son knew Sachin as Sara's dad. So I told him that Sara's dad is coming, and that you have to play with him. He said, "OK". Once Sachin came on the set, I told him, "I cannot direct

him. He just doesn't listen to me. You have to direct him … just engage him and we will shoot." Sachin is extremely good with kids. He may be uncomfortable with adults, but with kids, he works like magic. We had hidden four cameras around and I just let them play. It was a huge risk, we knew that we may not get anything out of it … but, we took a chance! Well, the risk paid off well! We got some magical moments which made the ad very successful!'

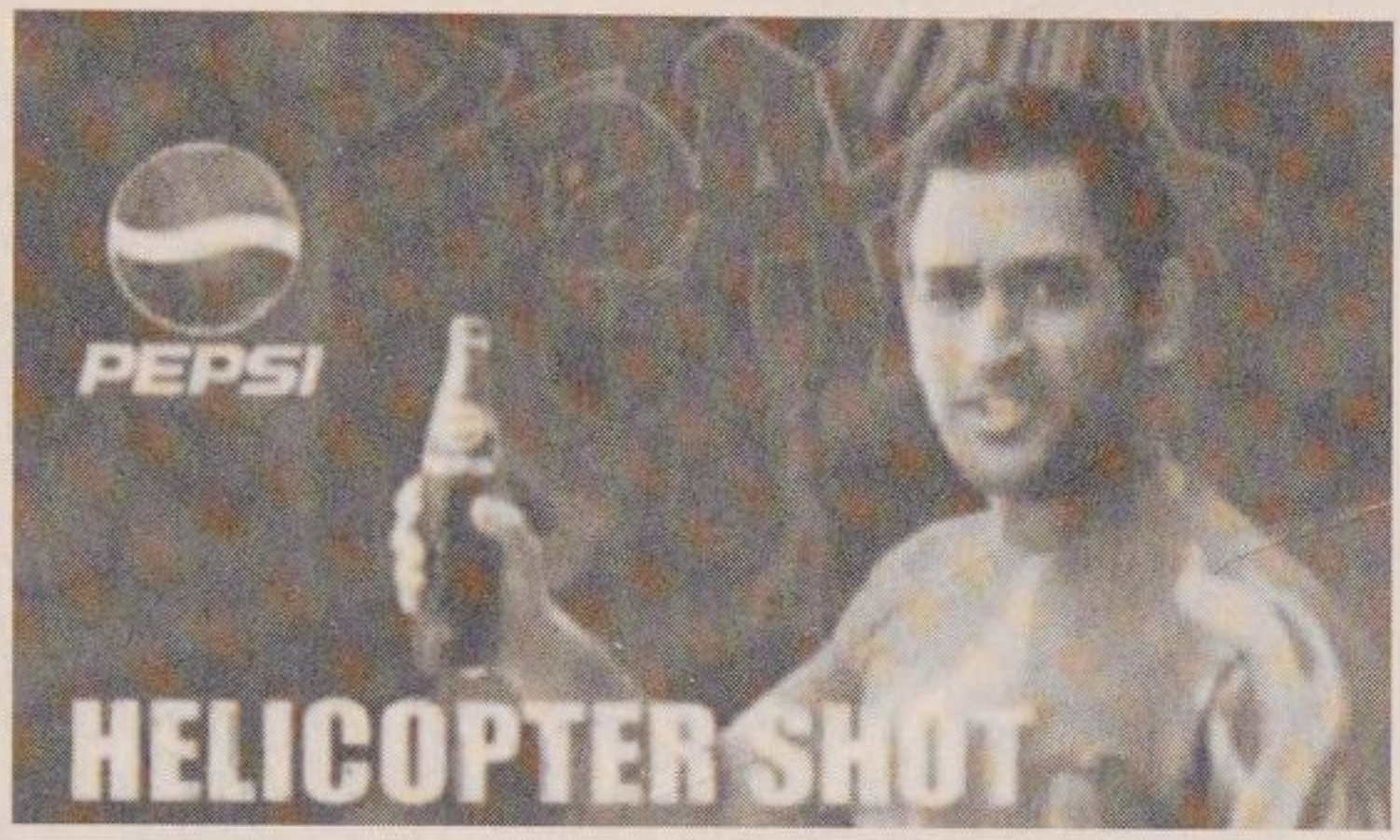
In the conversation thread of cricket, cricketer and advertising, the next yard I cover is a Pepsi campaign. It was a game changer for the brand literally! "Pepsi – Change The Game" is one of the most entertaining campaigns in the history of advertisement. It spread like wild fire. Each differentiated shot that we see these days on the field, was tweaked into a "people derived, people inspired" idea. The idea in itself is so refreshing, that there was no way this campaign would not be a success. Agnello, the creative brain behind the campaign and Prasoon Pandey, the director of the ads - both share some really entertaining nuggets of information.

The Game Changer

"It was released during the World-cup. Right? How did it all start?" I ask Agnello.

'Dhoni always would tell me, "Please don't make ads which say - 'World cup jeet ke layenge', it creates a lot of pressure on us and at times, we lose a match and the ad still keeps running … and people hate us even more, every time that they see the ad." I found this very true! Hence, I decided we would do something different. Because even in the brief, it was mentioned that the ads should be such, that even if we lose … they should be able to run them. Thus, the campaign had to be about (a). Cricket (b). The nothing official about it justification, and (c). Making sure that it should not be about, "Cup leke aayenge". It did not have to be about the particular series but about cricket as a game, in general.'

From this brief how did you reach the idea, "Change the game"?



"It all started from the observation that I had made - that "Cricket as a game had gone through more changes, than any other sport". Back when the game had just started being played, it was played as per the text-book. There were just a couple of new things, like the leg glance of Ranji and googly … rest all was just plain text-book. But post 1990, the game went through a humungous change; it saw the unparalleled change in the form of the gliding shot. A lot of new things began to brew. People seemed to have liked the changes and the game grew more popular.

From a technique specific game, it became a result-oriented game. Play anyhow but win. With this came in new heroes, who began playing odd shots. Which in no way, were a part of the text-book. And when you see these shots, you feel even you can play them. I can never play ***Rahul Dravid****'s shot because they are very heavy on technique. But the way in which the new breed of cricketers were playing, I felt as if they were all peoples' shots.*

In this change, I found my idea. I thought of creating some kind of an identity for these shots. Shots like cover drive are a whole chapter in the cricket text-book … but what about this new way of playing! Thus, we took the route where we would go onto show, that these shots were inspired! Inspired from what

people do in real life! The whole idea was centred around the thought - "What if people would have invented cricket!"'

How did you present this idea to the client?

'I was travelling to Delhi, to present the "Change The Game" idea. At that time, I did not have a film in mind; I had a print campaign in place, which I had written down. While in the flight, I also felt, that I should have the ad film idea ready, so that I could get both of them approved together. I began thinking along these lines - of what people do in their day-to-day life; that action becomes a shot. But people do so many things, that I decided to work backwards. First, I selected the shots. Then, I related them to real life action. So the shots I finalized on were -The Pallu scoop, which then was called "Dil Scoop", the helicopter shot and Kevin Peterson's shot. Pepsi approved the idea and the work began. It was lot of fun; Prasoon and I had written rhyming lines for the shots.'

Tell me some interesting facts about this campaign?

'There are many for the Kevin Peterson shot. We needed something that had a jump in it ... so, at first, we did it with courier guys and parcels. Later, we changed it to water-melons. For the helicopter shot, Dhoni pointed out, that in Goa, in a particular game he had played the helicopter shot perfectly and encouraged us to use that clip. "Dil Scoop" was initially named "Pallu Scoop", so Dilshan called back saying, "Please make it Dil Scoop! Can we name it after me?" Pops! We had also planned to feature Sachin's "Paddle Sweep" shot, where we had planned a Koli fisherman, with his boat and oar. But then, Sachin wasn't able to give time for it. The ads were also replicated in Bangladesh and a couple of other countries. Ehsaan did the music. And Pops! India even won that World-Cup!'

Any other anecdotes with any other cricketers?

'Yes! In the Nike ad, during the last shot, Zaheer Khan and Shreeshant were featured. When Abhinay was shooting that particular shot, we realized that Shreeshant's eyes were blue.

We were a bit perplexed and so, we called him, "Arey! Teri aankhein blue hai! Kyun?" So he replied, "Maine blue lens pehna hai … India ke T-Shirt ke saath match hota hai." It was hilarious. One more little thing, during the "Change The Game" ad, I was just chatting with Dhoni. I asked him, "How do you guys manage the sledging part of the game?" He smiled and replied, "If these days, some International player sledges a lot, Sehwag simply approaches him and says, 'We will not let you play IPL!'" and the player goes quiet.'

The campaign had become so popular, that commentators around the world had started to refer to these shots, with the names that the ad campaign had given. The "Change The Game" series, also had an ad, which featured Ranbir Kapoor and Sehwag in it; it was a very charming ad. Prasoon Pandey tells us some hilarious stories related to that ad.

'When we were doing the "Change The Game" ad, we were to write chants for those cricket shots. I felt, "Agar usmein thoda musical element daal de, toh mazaa agyega" (It would be great to add some musical element to the chants). So the chant that we used for Sehwag, was actually written for Sachin. But he could not make it, so we tweaked it to suit Sehwag's style and wrote, "Upar se aane ka, neeche dabane ka, peeche uthane ka haa!" Now, I purposely wanted the dance step for this line to be complicated. A mischief sprouted in my mind. I felt the real charm of the ad will be, if I trick shoot Sehwag. So I called up Ranbir and asked him to come at 8:00 AM, because I was planning to call Sehwag at 2:00. I told Ranbir that I wanted him to rehearse the step beautifully, before Sehwag joined in. Then I told Ranbir about the prank that I was planning, and he was game.

Sehwag came in at his designated time and asked, "Sir kya karna hai?" I replied, "Arey, kuchh nahin … bahut simple hai! Aise hi kuch haath uthana hai. Ranbir andar hai … he will tell you" So, he went inside to meet Ranbir, who said, "Ek rehearsal kar le?" To this, I said, "Haan! Karte hai, par camera roll karenge" and I shouted - "Roll camera, start sound". Now Sehwag was tense; as to why the camera was rolling for the rehearsal. Ranbir said, "Dekh aise kar" and he began with his

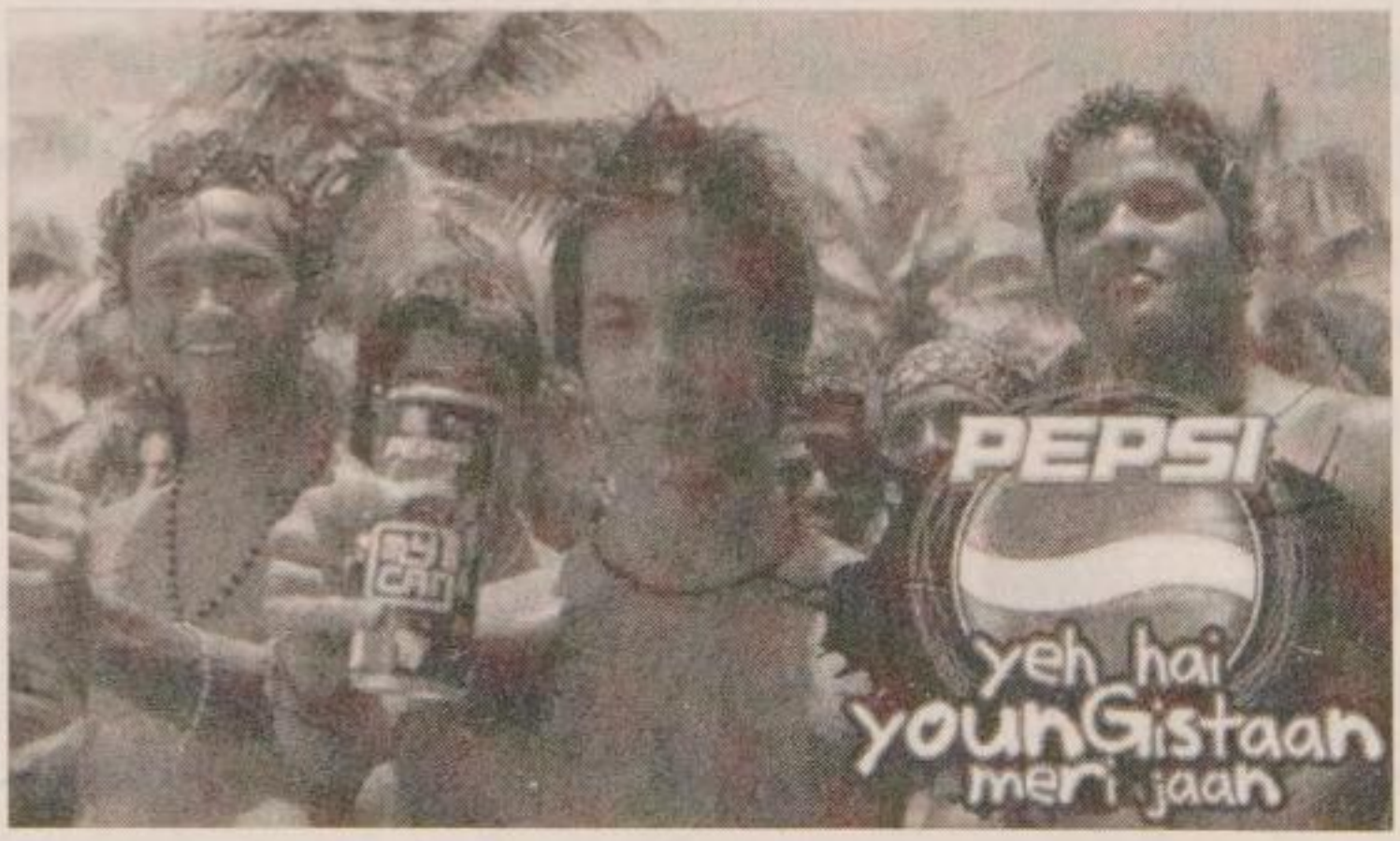
act. "Upar se aane ka, neeche dabane ka, peeche uthane ka haa." Sehwag was blank; he was just looking at him, without moving. A terrified expression of his was captured! It was amazing! Had I told him to act like that, I would have never got that expression.'

After terrifying him so much, how did you manage to get other dancing shots from him?

'"I told him that Sehwag, you don't have to be very good at this. People don't love you for your dance … they love you for your cricket". This made him feel at ease and then, he wasn't conscious anymore.'

'Pops, I have yet another very interesting anecdote with Sehwag and the other players; yet again for a Pepsi ad!'

Please share, my readers and I will be more than happy to know!



'This Pepsi ad, we were to shoot at the Kerala backwaters. Pops! Those waters look so beautiful … but when we went inside, to make the marking for the boats with bamboo sticks, we came to the reality. As soon as we submerged the bamboos inside the water, to measure, and then when we removed them, they came

all black and soiled. The water was so dirty. This meant, that the inside-the-water and the under-water shoots, I would have to complete in a single day … because once the cricketers came out, they would never agree to go back in the water again.

The caste which we had was – Sehwag, who was the senior most of all, and some more players. I approached my team and clearly instructed them, that once they were inside the water, each one of us had to ensure that they remained inside. The team was to keep serving them coffee, tea, snacks … whatever they wanted, inside the water only. So, on the day of the shoot, all the players entered the water and I began to take my shots. Even if they insisted on a break, I was like, "Nahin! Yeh bus kuchh aur shots baaki hai; khatam kar lete hai" and in this manner, I finished the entire inside-the-water shoot.'

What happened with Sehwag in particular?

'I did have a feeling, that he wanted to tell me something separately. So, as soon as he found me accessible, he came to me and said, "Sir, mein pooch raha tha … ke can I be sent back in two days? Mere shots agar pehle ho jaaye toh?" The way I am, I never say no to requests and with experience, I have mastered the art of handling such situations. I replied, "Of course yaar! No problem! You just have to do one thing for me … if everyone comes on time, we will be able to finish the shoot in two days and I will pack up!" So, he being the senior-most, gave a guarantee saying, "Arey hum kaam ke liye aaye hai … toh if the schedule is of 6:00 AM, we will reach at 5:45!" Thus, my trick worked, and I got all my shots, with everyone coming on time. But all this while, I knew there was no way the shoot could be done in two days. So, at the end of the second day, I went to him and told him, "Yaar! Dekha na tune … I tried really hard, but I couldn't complete it!" Now to a statement like this, the only answer one can give is, "Haan yaar! Thank you, I saw you tried a lot!". And he stayed back for the third day of the shoot also.'

You know Prasoon, I had a similar experience while shooting for a Reebok ad, way back in time … I think it was 1997-1998!

Letting them play

'The caste included **Rahul Dravid**, **Azharuddin** and **Jadeja**. Let me share that story with you and my readers. The ad was for Reebok and one thing, which we had realized about casting cricketers, was that they are only good at playing cricket; you can't expect them to dance and act flawlessly ... for it isn't their forte. Now for the Reebok ad, we had Azhar. He is an extremely conscious guy. He speaks really fast, in a staunch Hyderabadi tone. So for the ad, we decided that we will make them do what they are best at, i. e. make them play cricket! And the core thought of the ad was, "Enjoy playing the game". The entire shoot was scheduled for two days. Rahul Dravid being an excellent person, would always come on time - in fact, before time! He had no issues, no tantrums; an extremely professional guy. He is a very shy individual and gets conscious even when someone approaches him for an autograph or a photograph. Azharuddin too, was very simple. Sangeeta his wife was the disciplinarian. The only person with a bit of a hang-up was Jadeja. In the ad, there were some shots, where we needed all the three together; sometimes in pairs.

Everyone wanted to know their schedule and plan. So Jadeja, on the first day, after two to three hours of the shoot, was asking continuously -"Are we done?" So we took him aside, asking him if he had an issue. His reply was that he had accepted to be a judge at the Femina Miss India contest and was needed there. As our reply, we provided him with a simple logic, "This ad is going to run more times than your fastest century! Today, you may think that you have managed two things at a time ... but later, when the ad is aired and your shots are less ... you will realize what we meant to tell you here!" He simply replied, "OK! I will adjust".'

They all did their best and the ad came out really well. So much so, that once I had Sourav Ganguly come and tell me, "Pops! I keep doing these ads, where I am just doing what I am told. I want to do an ad like Reebok or Adidas. Who has done the Reebok ad?" He asked and I told him that I was involved in the ad. He was thrilled and he said, "Why don't

you do an ad like Reebok with me?" I said, "It isn't under my control ... but we shall surely try and see, if we can make it happen!"

As I talk about Sourav Ganguly, it reminds me of an ad, which never got aired. We did this ad for LG, as a part of their global 2003 world cup campaign. The LG ad was centered around the idea; "Cricket first" i. e. When it comes to cricketers, they only have cricket on their mind. We shot twenty-three ads, featuring all the cricket captains. Waqar Younis and Sourav Ganguly were going to be featured in one of the ads. I had no script in mind; I had written the script on the spot. While the first schedule was over, suddenly, another script took shape in my mind. This happened while I was conversing with Sourav.

I was talking to him and he said, "We as a team have everything - Fantastic batting order, great spinners ... What we lack is, that we don't have one good fast-bowler like Waqar or Wasim. For, if we have that element in our team ... we will be unbeatable!" I was thrilled and asked Sourav and Waqar to meet me, the next morning at 6:00 AM at the hotel gym. The idea was to shoot them, as they came out of the gym, sharing a thought that they both had, "Thatthey were in the same team"! We had an arrangement with Hilton; Colombo that we could shoot wherever and whenever! The ad had turned out to be brilliant ... but due to the then prevailing political climate, the ad wasn't aired!'

The Humble Wall

When you talk of Rahul Dravid, the experiences and opinions you hear are synonymous! Working with him, is the smoothest and the most pleasurable experience ever. His humility comes before him. The name 'Wall', in fact, was a product of a creative print ad that we had made for Reebok. It equated him to a wall and since then, the name caught up and became popular. I had a chance to work with him for the Reebok ad and my experience was amazing. Resonating with my story, is my friend Priti Nair who loves him for his

genuine self. The "Clinic All Clear – Dare to Wear Black" series also featured Rahul Dravid. And here is what Priti has to say about him -

'He is an extremely famous sports personality and yet, he has no air about it. For the "Dare to Wear Black Campaign", we were to do his hair treatment a day before the shoot. It is a norm for every hair-product ad. So he came to the hotel, driving all by himself in a Maruti 800. We were planning to take a cab. He insisted we don't and that he shall drop us. We went together and it was early morning; all the shops were closed. So we sat on the stairs of the closed shops and he joined us there. No starry tantrum that he needed a vanity van ... or even that he wanted to retire in his car! He was with us, chatting. The client invited him for dinner with the entire team and he said, "Sure! I will come". I thought he was simply being polite, but he did join us that evening. He came to the restaurant and there was a chaos. He came, had an aerated beverage, stayed and chatted for a while. He is a darling!'

Signing Off

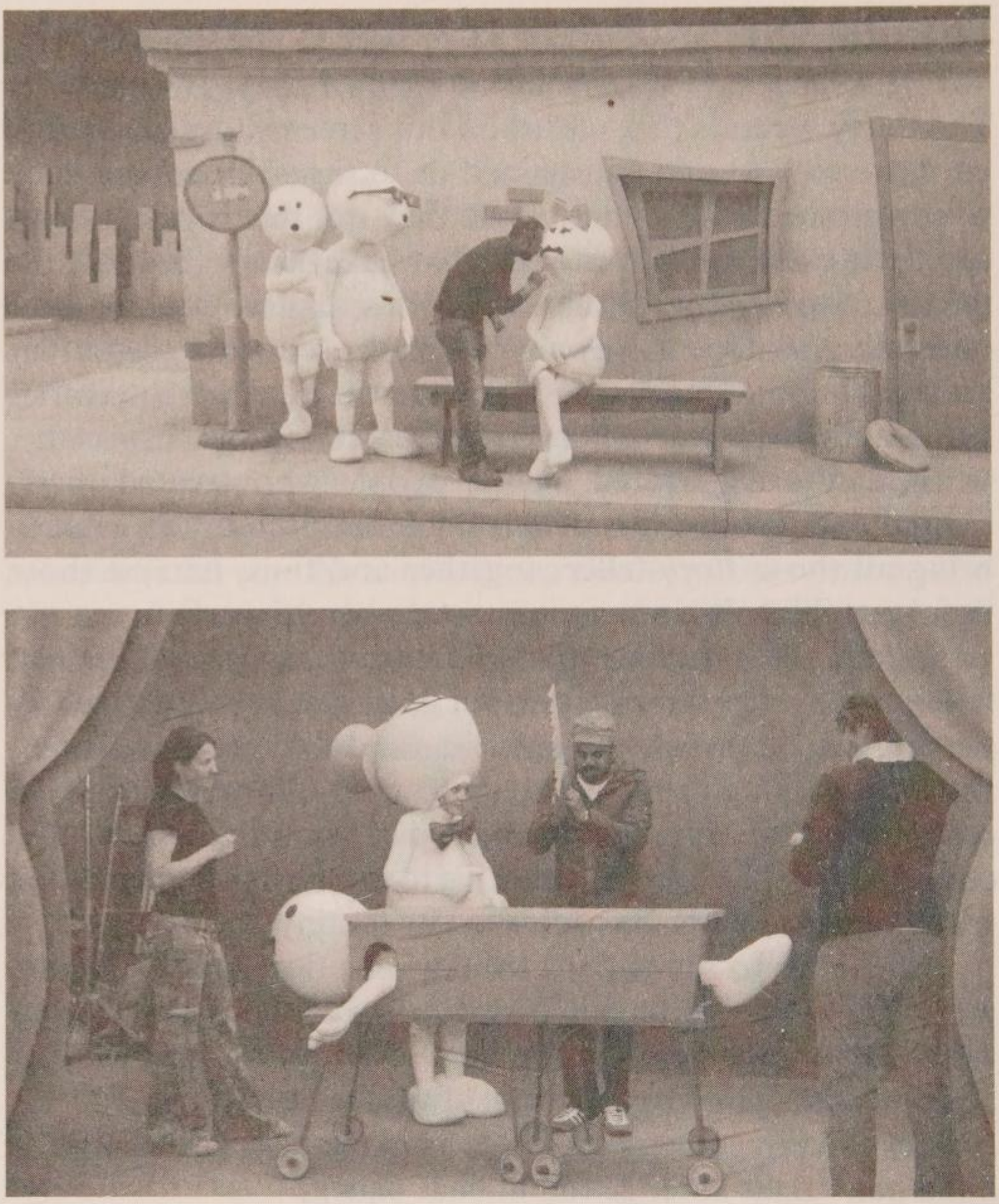
The thirty seconds that unfurl on our screens have enchanted us, entrapped us and entertained us for ages! Of course, they will continue to do so and while they do, this is my attempt to capture the million stories that take shape beyond the thirty second frame. While the stories that we see, are very interesting, seldom do we know the madness and the magic that goes behind making them! There are times, when the stories behind these stories are even more interesting! Especially, when they are narrated by the people who created them; crafted and chiseled them! This book has been my attempt to bring all those story-tellers together and thus, harvest those unforgettable tales into an immortal piece of work.

I simply assumed the role of a story-hoarder and the rest fell in place. I express my heartfelt gratitude to each and every person, who lent their valuable time and told me their stories, thereby enabling me to get them to you. I hope you enjoyed reading and savoring these stories, just like I did, over soulful conversations. I hope my initiative to establish a conversation with you, as readers, has achieved its destiny.

All I have to say is that, the conversation has just begun, a natural extension to this dialogue would be to accept your requests as readers. So, if you would like to know the stories about the ads you love, you can always write to me!

Let us keep conversing, let us keep the tales going! Kisi ne kaha hai, "Baat karenge toh hi baat banegi!"

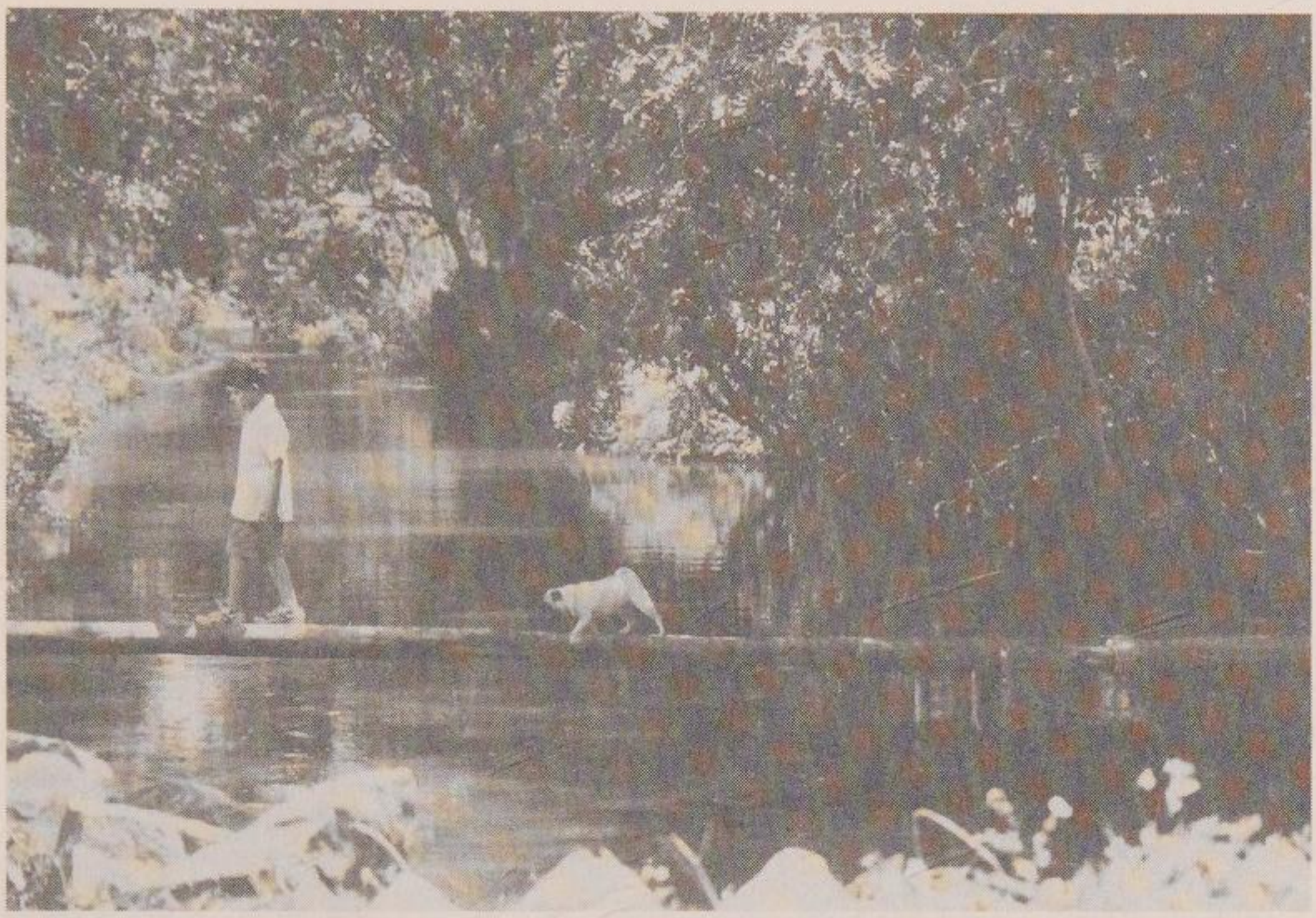
The Zenith of creativity: Zoozoo



Prakash Varma perfecting the act at the sets of Vodafone Zoozoo ads.

A set of stick-on expressions for Zoozoos spread across a table

Snapshots of the 'You', the 'I' and their 'Beautiful world'



The loveable duo — Jayraman followed by Cheeka in the most memorable shot

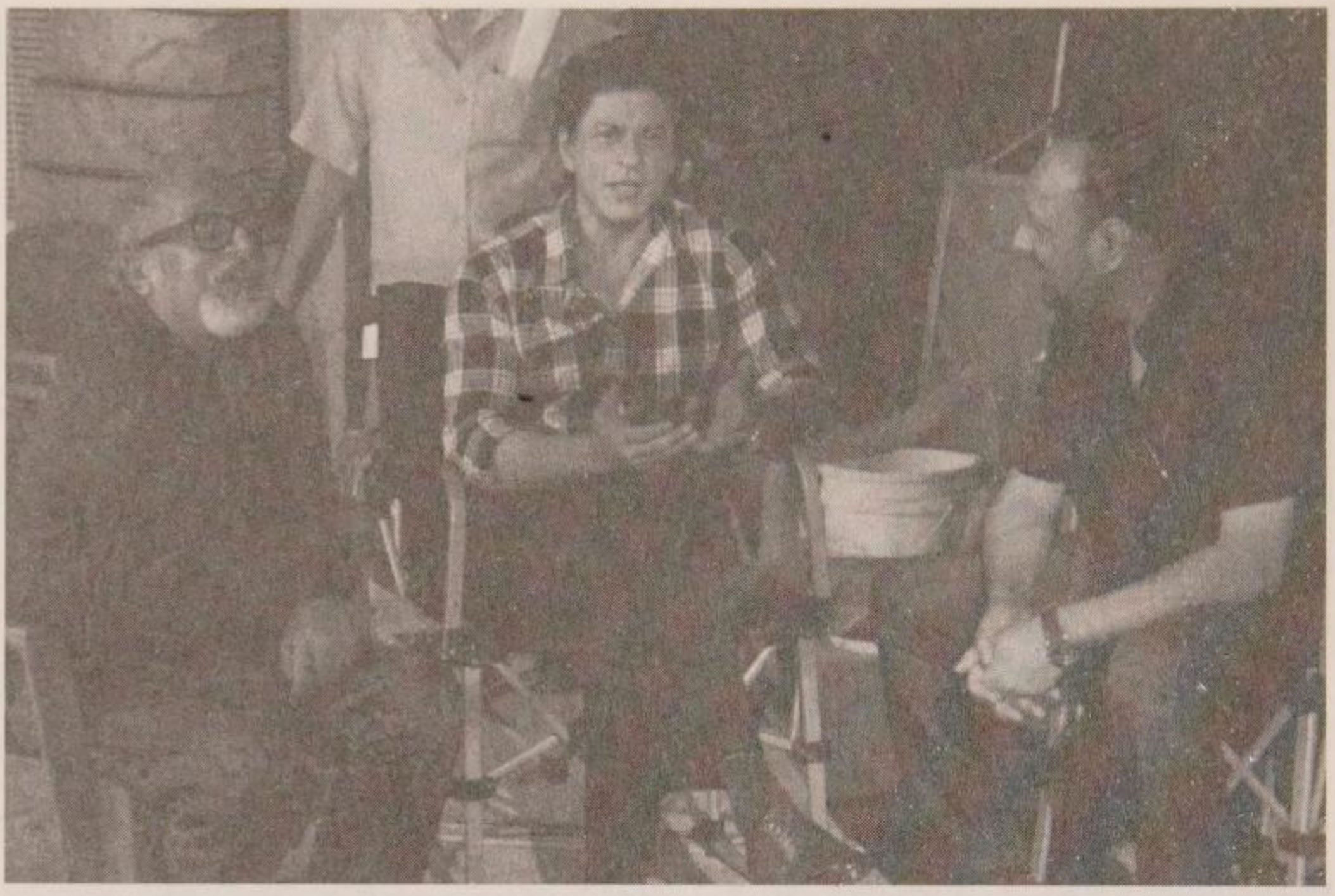
On the sets of Vodafone pug ad— Cheeka being held by a caretaker

Late Suresh Mallick (center) with Kailash Surendranath (left)

Bishan Singh Bedi and Milkha Singh (chatting) and Kailash Surendranath (left)

Ram Madhvani in action at the sets of an Airtel Ad

At the sets of DHFL Ad

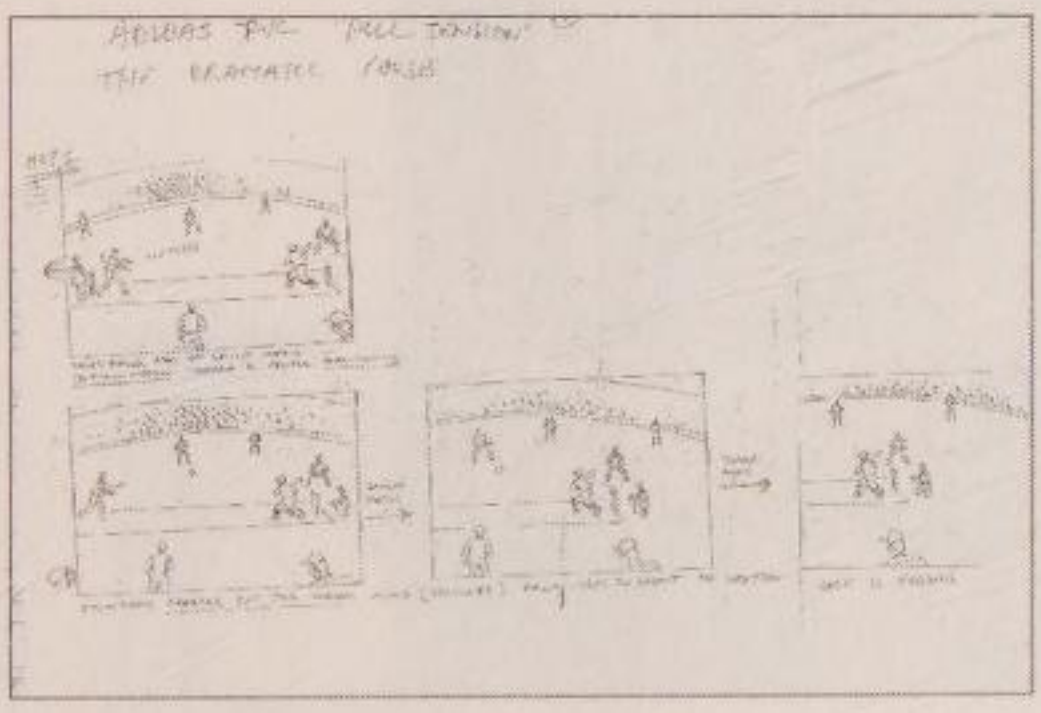


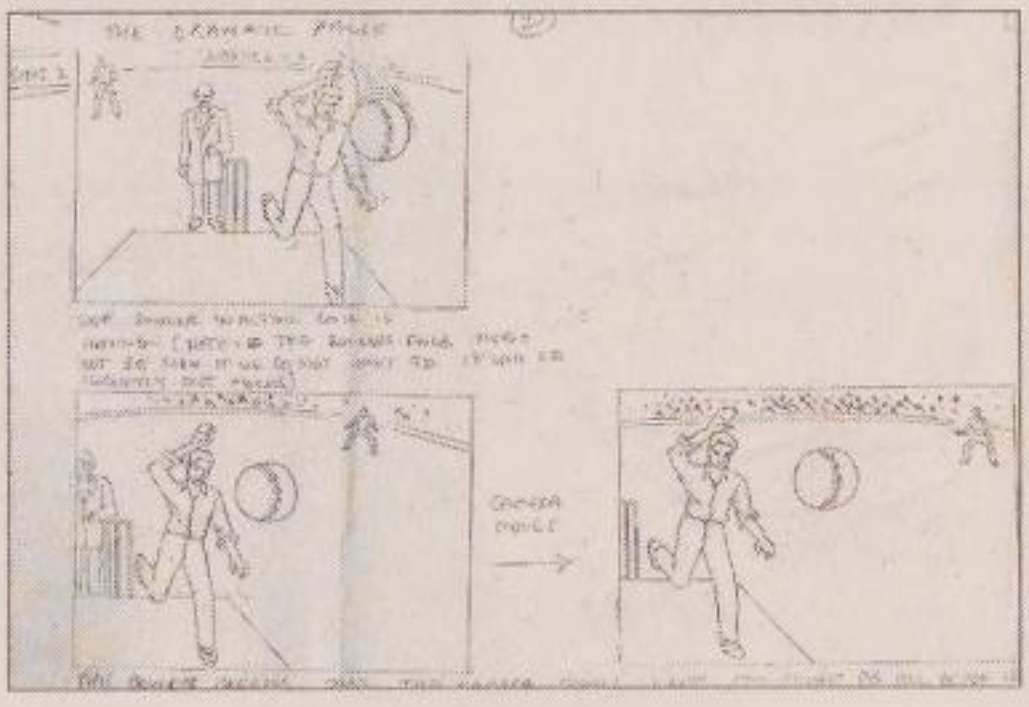
Sharukh Khan with pops and Suresh Mahalingam (Advisor to DHFL)

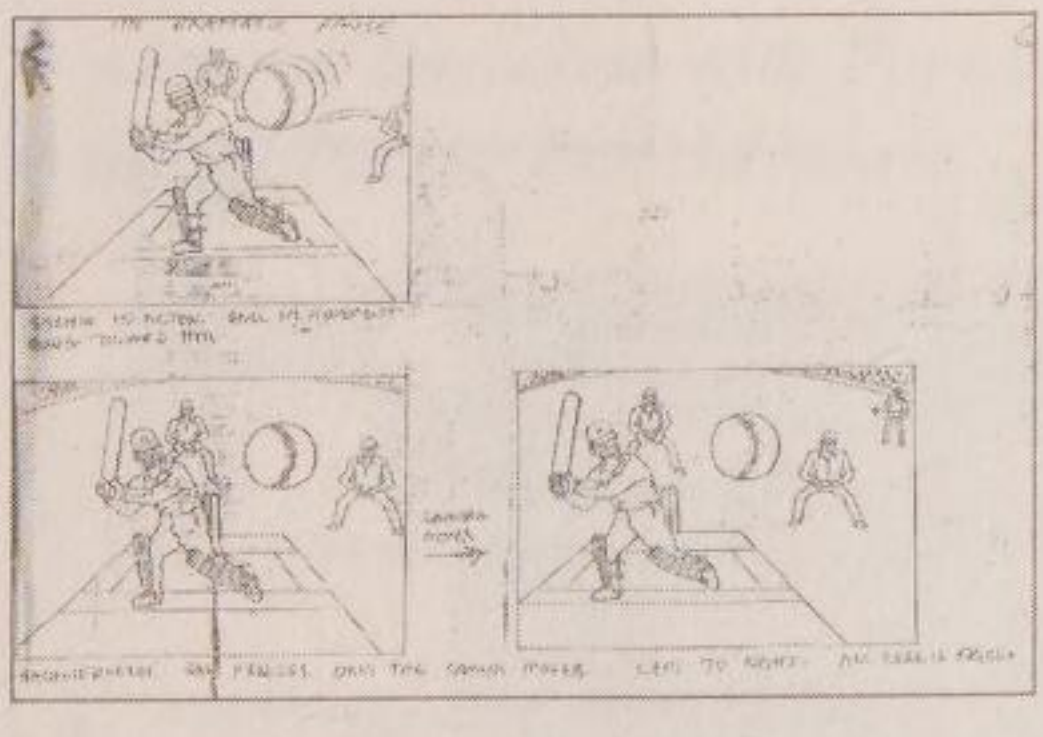
Director Nitesh Tiwari and Pops discussing the DHFL ad

The Ideas at thier Inception Stage: A Storyboard collection

Happydent
source: Equinox Films

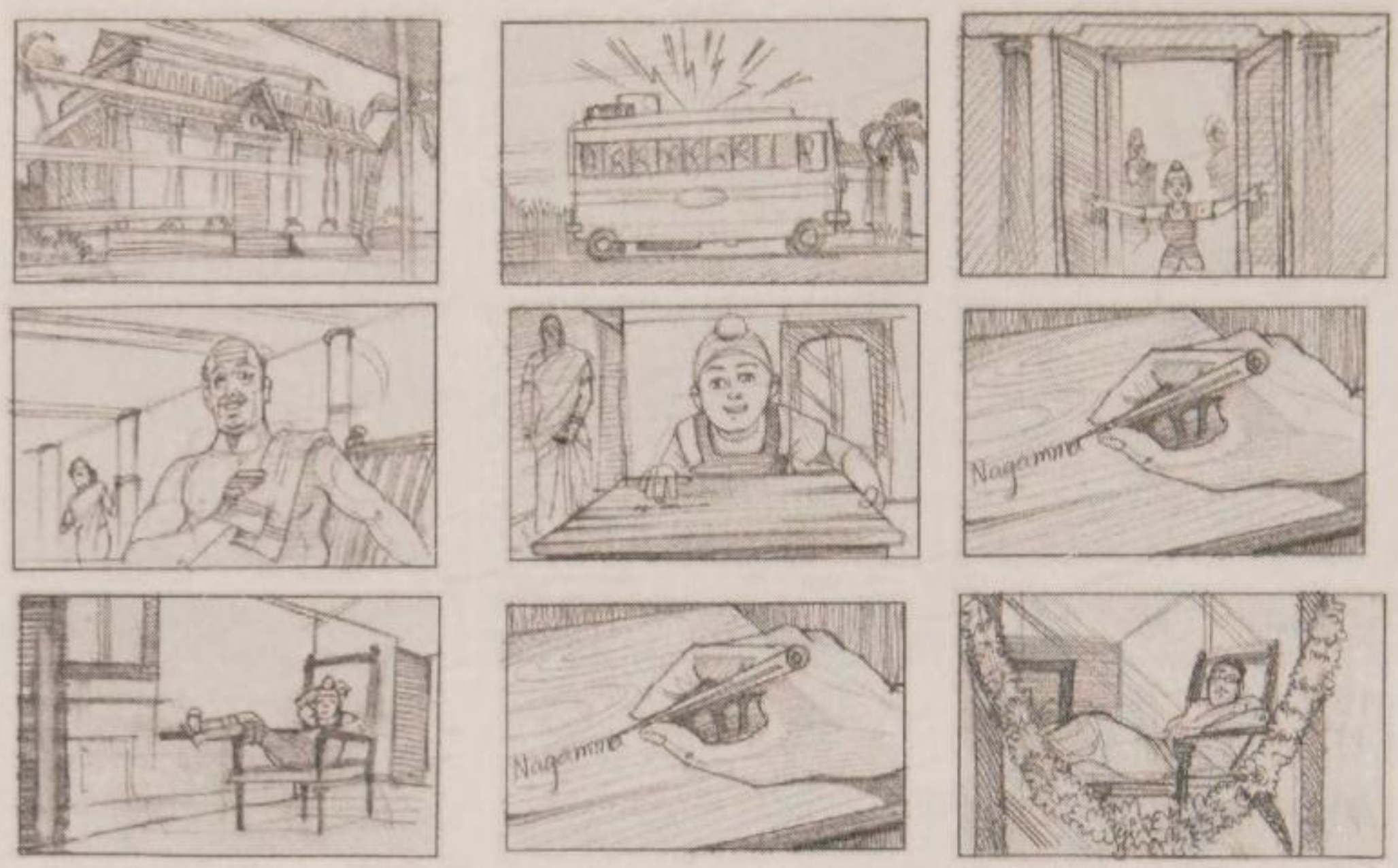




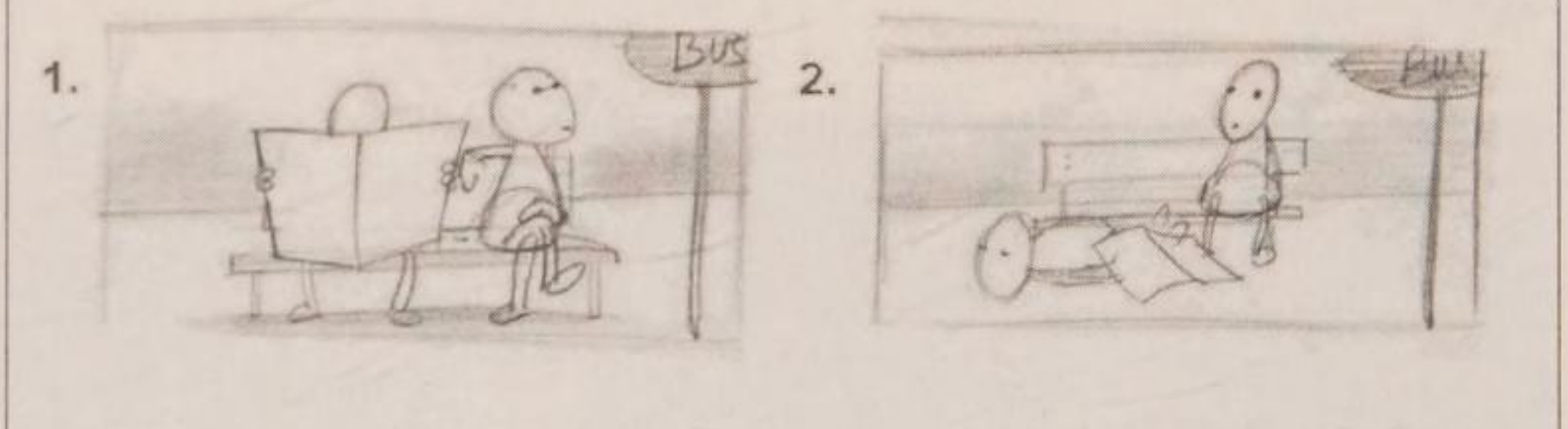


Adidas *Source: Equinox Films*

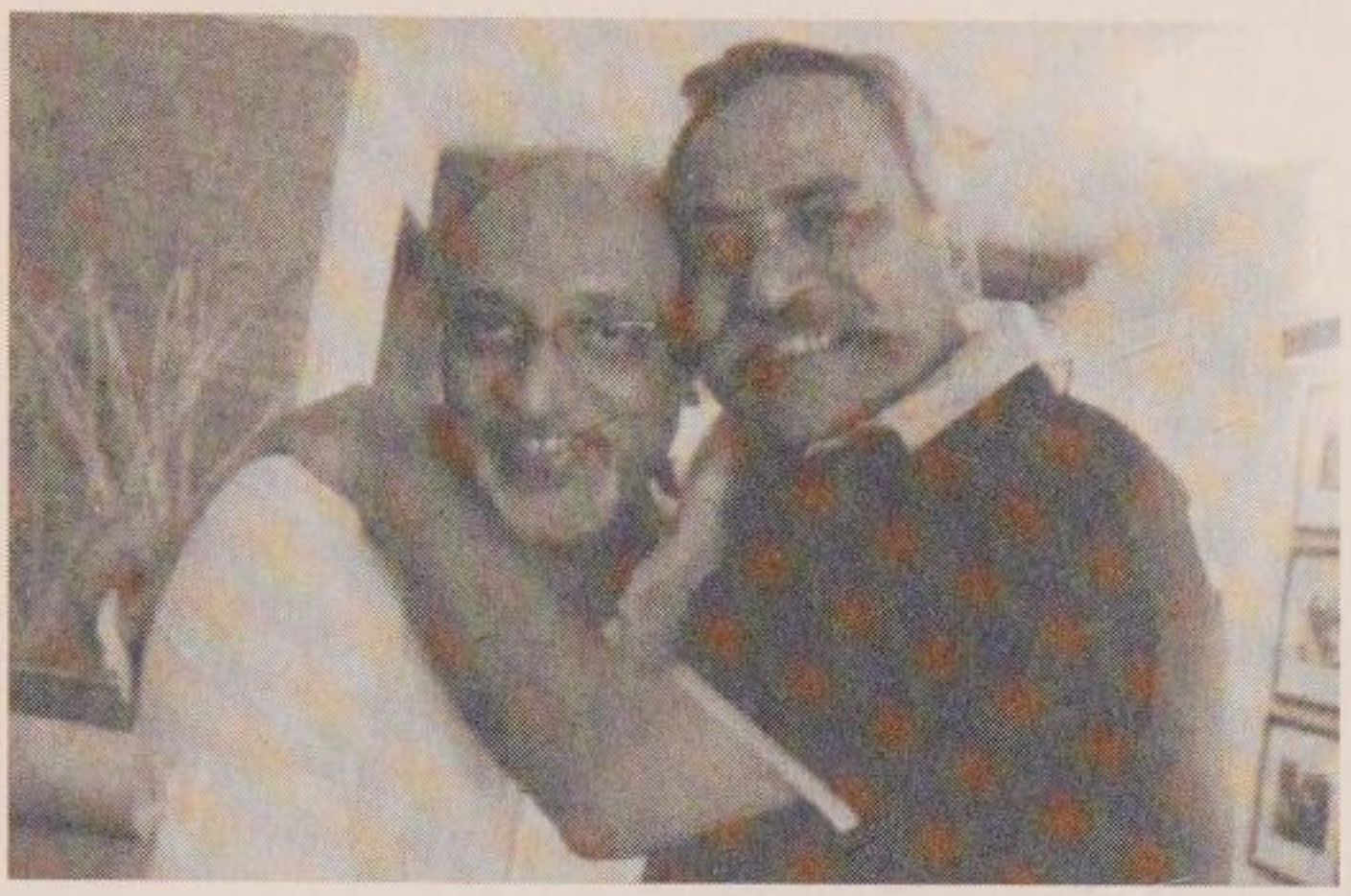
The Ideas at thier Inception Stage: A storyboard collection



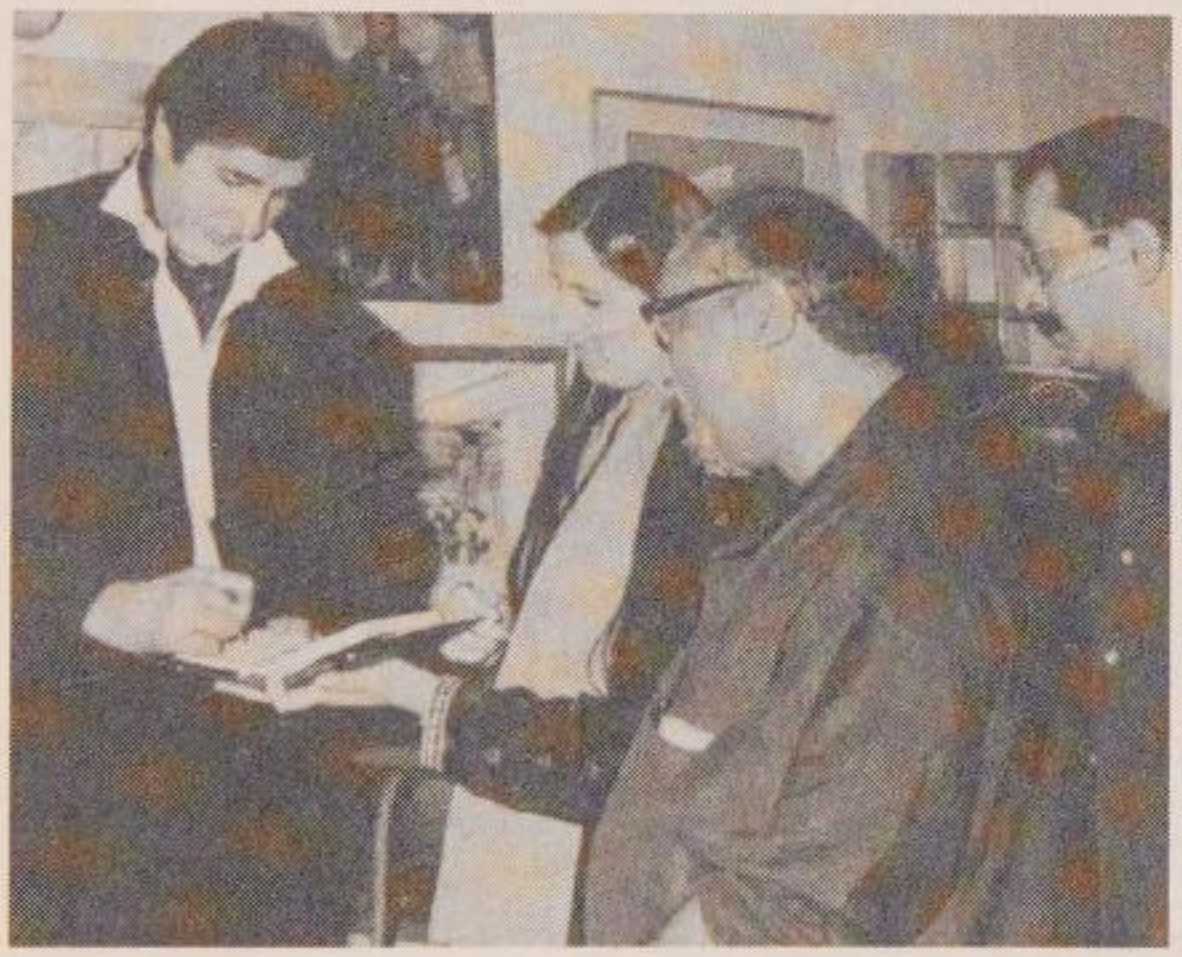
Greenply *Source: nirvana films*



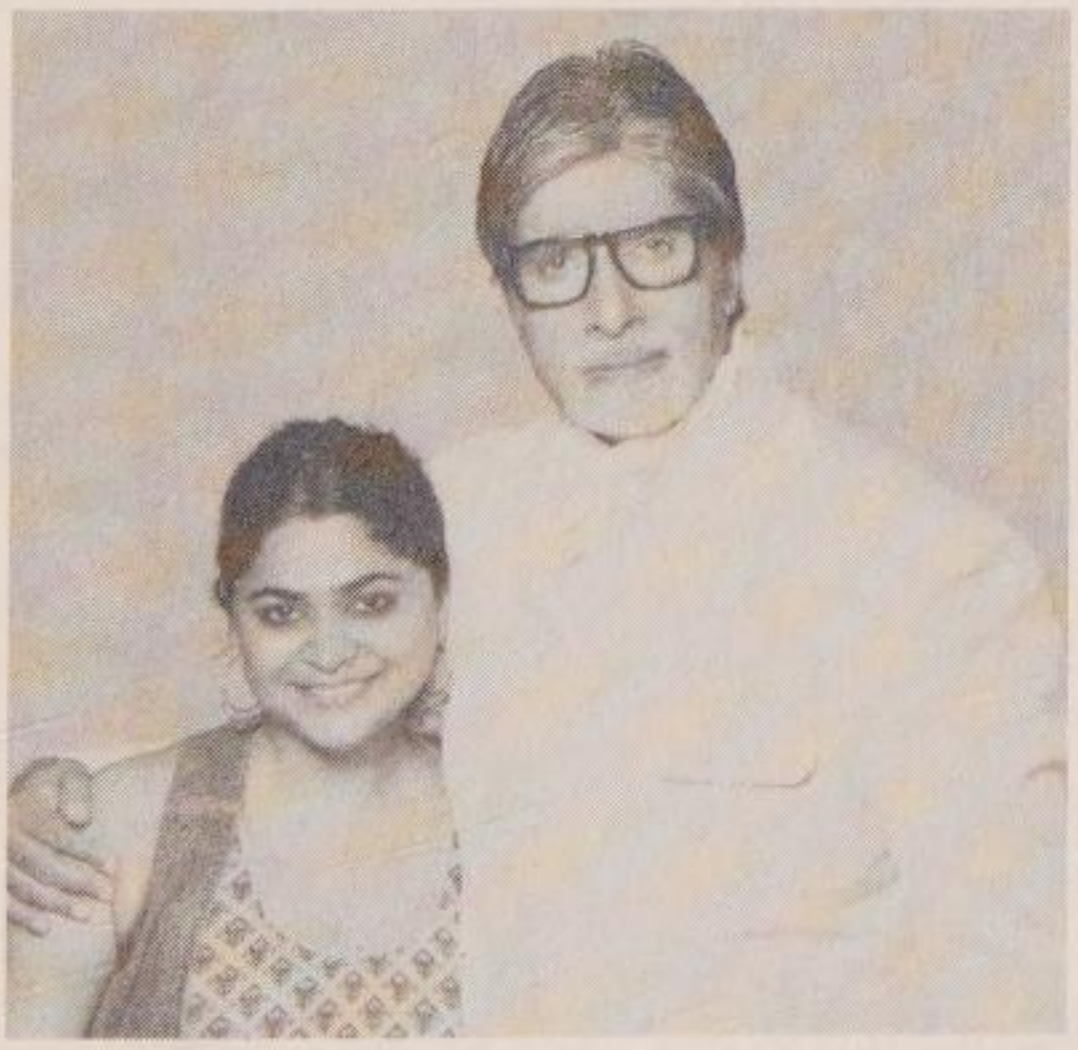
Vodafone: stock alert *Source: nirvana films*



Friendship ka Majbut Jod **-** *Piyush Pandey and Pops*



Amitabh Bachchan with Pops and the Lintas Team at the sets of Parker Pen Ad



Girl Power **-** *Amitabh Bachchan with Ashwini Iyer at the sets of KBC Girl Child Ad*

"Pops, has weaved a brilliant nostalgia for us!"
Piyush Pandey

"The book is like a reunion of the best advertising ideas, insights, people and stories."
Agnello Dias

"Sometimes the journey is as memorable as the destination. Pops gves you an insider's perspective on the making of memorable advertising campaigns and keeps it real, insightful and entertaining."
Nitesh Tiwari

"It chronicles the best phase of Indian advertising!"
R Balki

"This book is a reflection of quintessential Indians and the stories they love."
Ram Madhvani

"It is a delight for the curious questions and fascination of normal people who want to know what goes behind the curtains of their favourite ads."
Prasoon Pandey

"Pops has the knack of glimpsing into the heart of a story and the ability to weave a new narrative from it. Unravelling the many layers, he draws you into a world of advertising that's seen through a lens that's inmitably Pops. He has gained access to not only the imagnation that went behind the creation of iconic ideas and campaigns but also the treasure trove of anecdotes that interlace and delight. Enjoy the ride."
Prasoon Joshi

Available as an eBook

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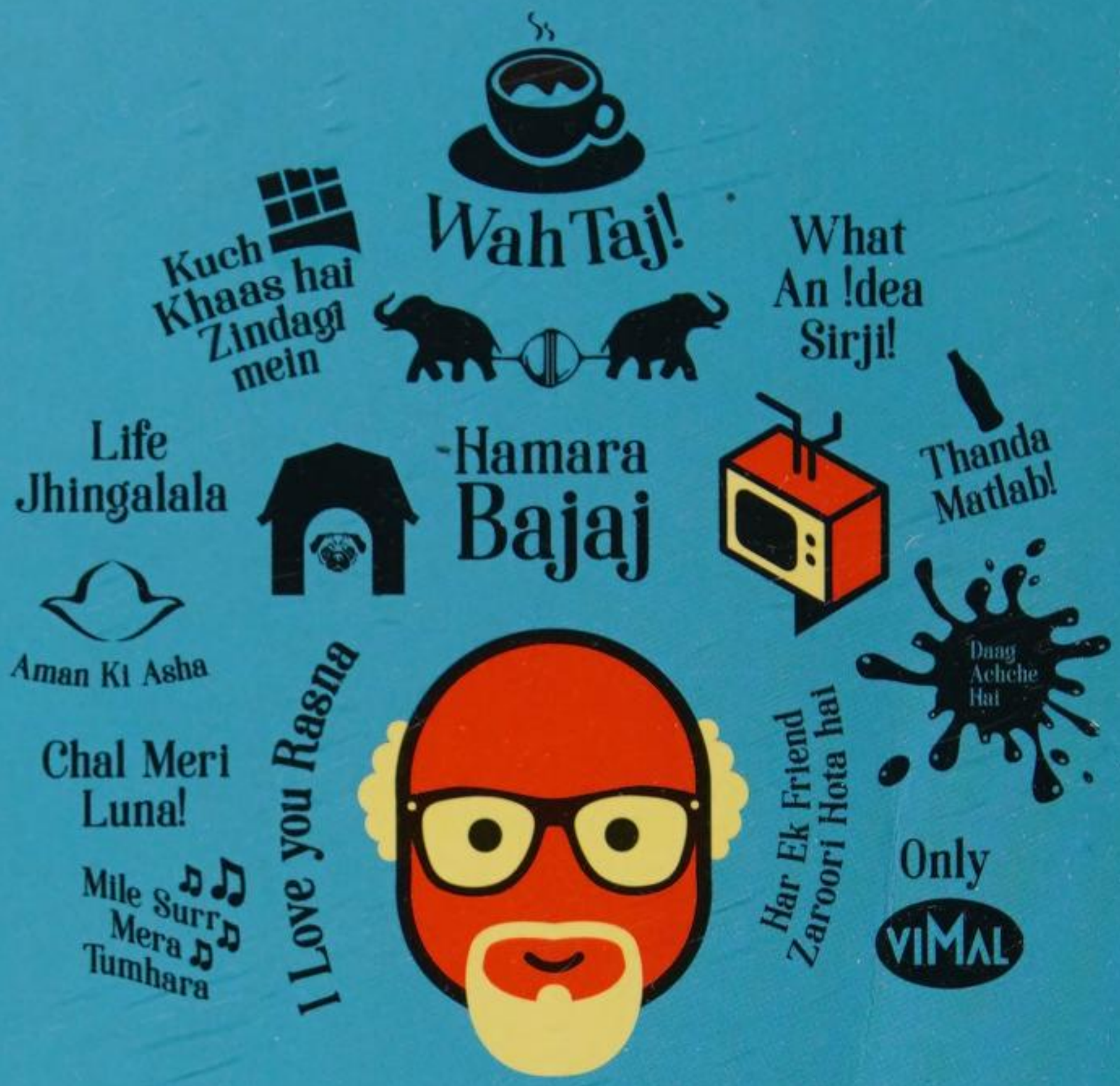

Behind the scenes, stories & anecdotes shared by its magnificent makers

Alyque Padamsee, Late AG Krishnamurthy, Piyush Pandey, Prasoon Joshi, R Balki, Josy Paul, Prahlad Kakkar, Kailash Surendranath, Prasoon Pandey, Ram Madhvani, Shantanu Sheorey, Prakash Varma, KS Chakravarthy, Agnello Dias, Gauri Shinde, Amit Sharma, Nitesh Tiwari, Priti Nair, Arun Iyer, Shriram Iyer, Ashish Khazanchi, Kartik Iyer and Parshu Narayanan

A part of the proceedings earned from this book will go to an NGO called, 'Population First' for its saving the girl child initiative - 'Laadli'

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